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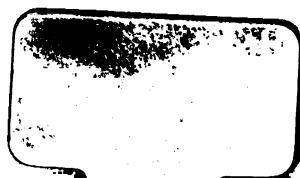
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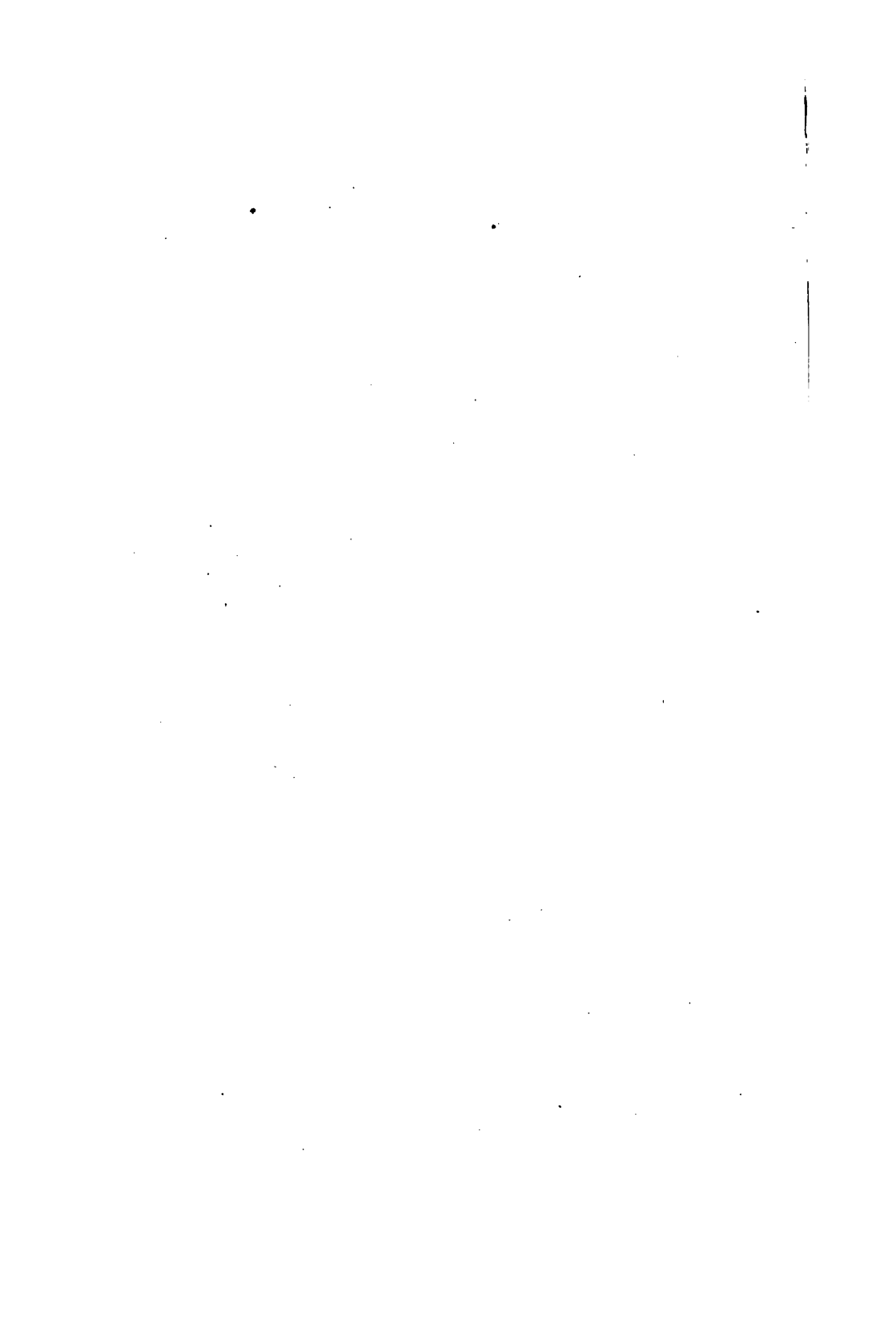
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GERALDINE MAYNARD;

OR,

THE ABDUCTION.

A TALE OF THE DAYS OF SHAKSPEARE.

BY CAPTAIN CURLING,

AUTHOR OF "THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE," "JOHN OF ENGLAND,"
"SHAKSPEARE, THE LOVER, THE POET," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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GERALDINE MAYNARD,

OR

THE ABDUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

SUCH tavern brawls in Elizabeth's reign were oftentimes of nightly occurrence, and were not unfrequently the origin of more serious riots, in which the 'prentices became mixed up with the town gallants, and the sheriff himself "with a most monstrous watch," was fain to turn out and quell the disturbance. In the present instance more than one person was killed, and several were wounded and injured.

The absence of the hostess of the tavern,

and also the want of the presiding genius of the room, had helped to make the brawl grow to the dimensions it had done ; so that when the player-poet in the early morning, after a night of watching and anxiety, entered the room and beheld the signs of the riot, he was sufficiently surprised.

His absence, as we have seen, had been enforced by the nature of the duties he felt himself called upon to perform. Rookwood's escape on a board a vessel had to be effected on that night or not at all, and this with some little difficulty he had managed.

The officers of justice had tracked the fugitive nearly as far as Blackfriars, and lost all further trace of him after he had crossed the river.

The great difficulty was to get Rookwood to leave the house in which Geraldine lay, so deeply did he feel for her misfortune in being wounded in his cause, and so impressed was he with her devotion in his service. Nay, it

was only when Shakspeare had clearly shewn him that if he was captured in his lodgings, such an event would involve all concerned in his own ruin, that Rookwood could at last be prevailed to go on board a small vessel which lay near Greenwich, and which was bound for the New World. Indeed, the poet had to use all his eloquence to persuade the exile to depart.

"All places that the eye of Heaven visits,
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens :
Teach thy necessity to reason thus ;
There is no virtue like necessity.
Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honour,
And not the Queen exil'd thee ; or suppose
Devouring pestilence hangs in our air,
And thou art flying to a fresher clime.

* * * *

Come, come, I'll bring thee on thy way,
Had I thy youth and cause I would not stay."

And thus Shakspeare, after leaving Geraldine in charge of mine hostess of the tavern for the night, had conveyed Rookwood in

safety to the boat which was to convey him to his ship, and then returned after leaving the tavern, to watch over his charge.

As he did so, he found to his great joy that Geraldine was at least no worse, and as she still slept, he carried the half starved Leech with him to the tavern, in order to procure him some refreshment; for he determined the old man should not leave his patient all that day if he could detain him. Indeed he had with his piercing, keen and penetrating eye, discovered a gem of the first water in this old practitioner, so neglected, so poverty-stricken, so starved and so wan.

He found that he was far beyond the age in which he lived, and whilst others of his craft had been spending their time uselessly in hunting after the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Life, and all such chimeras, this man had made the human frame and chemistry his study, and was a most profound scholar and practitioner.

At dawn, therefore, the poet and his new friend, the Leech, entered the common room of the tavern, and the poet called for breakfast.

"Buy food, and get thyself in flesh," he said, as he put another gold piece in the hand of the apothecary.

"But I have monies here, good master," said the Starveling, bringing out his purse; "monies which you generously gave me last night."

"Keep that for further need then," said the poet. "Nay, I will give thee more, much more, if you do your best to save that 'fair excellence' from death."

"Certes, I will try and do my best, good youth," returned the apothecary; "but such wounds are followed by dangerous consequences at times. Present danger is, I trust, over, albeit the stab hath caused much loss of blood. Fever and lock-jaw is what we have to dread now, consequences that too often

follow the treatment of my brother practitioners, and which treatment I altogether eschew."

"I trust thee in all things," said Shakspeare ; " and now for the next hour I must be absent, as I have to visit the theatre. Meanwhile remain where you are till I return."

CHAPTER II.

GERALDINE MAYNARD remained for many days in a precarious state. Life was in a flickering state like a half expiring candle, and only the watchful care of Master Basset, the apothecary, and that of mine hostess of the Warwick Arms, sufficed to save her; and when at length she seemed in a fair way of recovery, a low and dangerous fever supervened.

The poet's lodging was pleasantly situated. Its window beetled over the waters of the River Thames, which at that period, when folks did not so well understand "the skiey influences," and that death so oft lurks in the breezes which nightly blow over the marsh

lands and wastes, was considered more healthful than the healthful airs inland, Geraldine loved to sit at the casement, and watch the gay scenes which the river presented. So many boats constantly passing, such gorgeously appointed barges, too, filled with cavaliers and ladies fair. For Geraldine's illness was a long one, and when not engaged in watching the traffic on the Thames, or opening the various books with which the poet's lodging was stored, she attempted to copy some of the difficult scrawls which her friend was so constantly inditing, and which lay at times strewed about the floor of the apartment. How much she loved to watch that countenance of genius and beauty, as he sat at a small table placed beside the chimney, and wrote and wrote, sometimes for whole days together, and perhaps, as she conjectured, long after she herself and the female attendant who always sat distaff in hand in the room, had retired for the night.

Her aunt and uncle had more than once

made a journey to London to see her, and were anxious that she should return to Barnes. Geraldine, however, seemed in no way inclined to do so. She pleaded her illness, and that she was better where she was.

"Nay, lass," said old Maynard, "but thee must consider thee must not be a burthen to one who has so long and so well befriended thee."

"A burthen, Master Maynard ; a blessing say rather," returned the poet. "I shall indeed be dull when I lose so sweet a companion."

"Ah, well, perhaps so," returned the Miller ; "but still the lass must, I say, come back soon anyhow. All Barnes and Mortlake are grieving for thee, and wanting thee back, Geraldine."

And so at length a day was fixed, and Geraldine Maynard was to leave her gifted friend, and return home. That day fortnight was the time specified.

One day as Geraldine sat at the casement after her uncle and aunt had left, gazing upon the stream, she beheld a goodly company passing by. The Queen's barges filled with attendants; then came the state barges of several nobles, all furnished, all gorgeous to look upon; then followed the Queen; sweet music keeping time to the oars as they dipped in the stream. Her Majesty was returning from her palace at Greenwich, where she had spent the morning. After the royal cortège came other barges filled with cavaliers and ladies. One pulled quite close beneath her window. It was the galley of Lord Rich, and filled with his most intimate friends—birds of a feather, roaring blades all. They stopped as they recognized the lovely face of Geraldine. Lord Rich stood up, lifted his hat and bowed.

"Fore Heaven," he said, "such a face as that deserves our homage; gentlemen all, I never saw true beauty till this hour. Let

music play that we may give her a fitting serenade."

The musicians of Lord Rich's barge immediately struck up a lively measure, which the cavaliers accompanied with their voices, and then once more bowing, they passed on.

Not, however, before my Lord Rich had noted the exact situation of the house, and spoken to an attendant.

"Find me out who dwells in that house," he said to one of his fellows, "and bring me word to-morrow who that female is."

The man he spoke to was a tall stalwart fellow, a sort of upper servant or familiar ; one who had the management of his lordship's affairs in general, and was entrusted with all his intrigues and evil doings.

Those were times in which it was dangerous for a powerful noble to be attracted towards a beautiful female in an inferior station. Such men stood to no repairs in

their amours, and their instruments being bold lawless villains, even worse than themselves, made no scruple of abducting young women, and even putting them to silence if they were troublesome.

My Lord Rich was an unscrupulous libertine, as well as a dishonest caitiff. His great riches gave him immense power to do harm.

The face of Geraldine Maynard as she bent forward and looked from the casement, so innocently and so amused with all she saw passing, that at first she hardly noticed the attention she caused, quite haunted him as he progressed onwards towards Whitehall, and had he not been engaged on that evening to the house of his intended, he would have immediately sought her out.

As it was, on stepping from his barge he again spoke to his attendant, and again bade him at once seek out the house in which she dwelt, and without delay discover all he could regarding her.

"Hark ye hither, Corbelt," said the titled miscreant, "I feel greatly interested in the female I spoke to thee about, albeit I had but a passing glance. Such a form and such a face as I beheld as she reached out of the window, is not to be seen every day; she must be surpassing when fully observed. Therefore go at once without delay and quickly bring me all the tidings thou canst gather."

"Love at first sight, my lord, eh?" said the familiar with a grin; for such myrmidons know their own worth, and as far as they dare are familiar with their employers.

"Perhaps so," said his lordship drily.

"And yet," returned Corbelt, "methinks had I as much on my hands, and such a bride in prospect as your lordship, I could be content to let the city beauties alone."

"Pshaw," returned Rich, "thou knowest but little of such matters, nor how they affect

us nobles, clever as thou accountest thyself. Go, sirrah, do as I bid thee."

"Well, my lord, I will at once without more circumstance do your bidding," returned the servitor. "Nevertheless, you will do well to remember that the day is all but fixed for your espousals with the Lady Devereux, and I would advise you to let nothing come in the way of that matter."

His lordship smiled, and looked hard at his attendant. "Because of the rich guerdon you are to receive on the day of my marriage, eh, Corbelt?" he said. "Well, be comforted, I will scarce let that matter slip through my fingers."

"I have done my part to help bringing it about, that's certain," said Corbelt doggedly, "and shall hope for as fair settlement as the bride may look for."

"You shall have all I have promised," said the Lord Rich impatiently, yet fearing to

anger his dependant. "Hence, be Mercury, and return to me with all speed."

This conversation had taken place upon the landing opposite Lord Rich's mansion, on the banks of the Thames, and as that noble ascended the stone steps which led to the main entrance, his satellite stepped into a hired wherry, and was immediately rowed back towards Blackfriars.

Having noted the house according to orders, there was little difficulty in finding it again. It was an ancient edifice, standing on the verge of the river; a large mansion which had been long untenanted, the poet had chosen to fix on it as a winter lodging, as he thought that what time he did spend in his own home, it would be best to have that refuge as quiet and secluded as possible; and there oftentimes with no interruption but the sough of the wind upon the waters, he sat and wrote some of his wondrous productions.

Pierce Corbelt after noting the window which looked upon the stream, landed, and in order to reconnoitre the house on the land side, and make further observations, walked quietly round.

A small court-yard was before the front door, and Pierce entered it.

As he did so the door opened, and an old and wan-looking man emerged, and with head bent, and timid steps would have passed out into the street, but Pierce stopped him.

"Good even, friend," he said.

"The same to you, fair Sir," replied our friend the apothecary.

"Thanks," returned Pierce; "I seek a friend and am something strange to this part of the town: canst tell me who inhabits here?"

"What in this house?" inquired the apothecary.

"Yes."

"Master Shakspere."

"Ho! ho! Master Shakspere, eh; and hath he wife or daughter, too, here with him?"

"Neither, as I believe, fair Sir."

"Yet methought I saw a female at the window as I passed just now?" said Corbelt.

"Geraldine Maynard, a very worthy young woman, and well given," returned the simple practitioner, "you must assuredly allude to her, she dwells here just now. I am in attendance upon her for a very serious hurt she hath received."

"Geraldine Maynard eh?" said Corbelt, "so that is her name, eh?"

"Yes, fair Sir, a good and sweet-tempered lass; but I prithee, delay me not longer in converse, for I am bound to see a patient in Chepe."

As the apothecary spoke he passed on, and Pierce having discovered all that was neces-

sary at that time to know, also turned and left the place.

"Ho, ho, Master Shakspeare," he said, "and is it so? thou hast thy Lindabrides, thy friend here, hast thou? so far so good. My lord had better see further into the matter, I trow."

Accordingly when my Lord Rich was informed of the name and all appertaining, he took boat the next morning, and called at the house.

Master Shakspeare was absent at the theatre, the old dame informed him on his knocking at the door.

"Can I write a letter to him?" inquired the noble lord.

"An' it so please ye to enter," said the servant, "you will find pens and paper within."

"Perhaps I could speak with the lady who dwells here?" inquired the noble.

“Mistress Geraldine Maynard ; I will call her.”

Lord Rich looked round the apartment, glanced at the manuscripts upon the table, noted the room and all in it, and then stepped to the ample casement, and looked out at the waters beneath. As he turned, he beheld Geraldine, who had entered the room by a side door.

My Lord Rich had not a very favourable opinion of woman-kind in general. His intercourse with them had hitherto taught him to imagine that every female was to be caught with flattery, riches, and outward show. Truth, honesty, and virtue he believed were not to be found in the sex at all, whatever their outward seeming might be. Nevertheless in the young girl who stood before him, he saw something which commanded his respect, and whose rich beauty quite overcame him for the moment. He doffed his

plumed beaver, which he had as yet not removed, and made her a most profound bow.

"Forgive me, loveliest of your sex," said he, "for this seeming intrusion."

Geraldine was all goodness and affability to all; but she saw something in this man's look and bearing which she did not like. She recognised his features, too, as having before seen him somewhere or other, and consequently she immediately drew back.

"Have you aught to communicate to me, fair Sir?" she said, "that you sent for me here?"

"Much, most exquisite and unmatchable Geraldine."

Geraldine's eyes flashed fire; but she restrained her indignation.

"On business?" she inquired sharply.

"Business the most important," returned his lordship.

"You have then come with some message of import to the owner of these rooms," said Geraldine, suddenly recollecting that perhaps this person might be one of Shakspeare's courtly friends.

Lord Rich surmised that the high-flown language of the court gallant would at once impress the city maiden, be she what she might. So he at once poured forth a whole litany of impertinence in praise of her exquisite loveliness and his own admiration.

"Myself, my fortune, all I own in the world is thine, so thou wilt but take me for thy lover, lady," he said.

Geraldine looked at him for a few moments in a state of bewildered astonishment.

"So you came not here to visit the owner of these rooms, you came to see me, you say?"

"Thou speakest, sooth, most radiant; struck, blinded, annihilated by thy beauty, I

came to offer thee riches, pleasure, high station, all the world can give."

Geraldine had the courage of a lion, and was somewhat amused at the rhapsodical style of the man; she drew herself up and smiled as he now threw himself on his knees.

"All the world can offer, eh?" she said. "Let me reckon up these offers. Yourself to begin with; that means an offer of marriage, I trow. Excuse me, I am but a simple country lass, and must consider those good gifts. What else?"

Lord Rich hesitated; he looked confused and abashed before her fierce eye.

"Ah, I see, you begin to reflect, to repent," continued Geraldine, "already."

"Marriage is a matter of wordly interest, lady," said Rich, "in the vocabulary of Cupid it should be erased, an' I had my will."

"Ah, I see again," continued Geraldine,

“you would eschew so dull a ceremony. What else have you to offer?”

“State, station, splendour, all that money can buy or love procure.”

“Away, wretch,” she said, “I know you now, truly, thoroughly; nay, I condemn mine ears for so long listening to your vile address.”

Lord Rich stood dumbfounded—abashed.

“You saw me from that window, did you say?” she continued. “Henceforth I will not look upon the waters again, lest mine eyes should be offended by the sight of such a miscreant. Hence at once!” she exclaimed, stepping to the small door by which she had entered the room. “Hence, and pollute not this dwelling longer by your presence.” Then calling aloud to the female who always sat in the room she occupied: “Mistress Bridget, show this person hence, lest he who owns this chamber should return home and cast

him headlong from the window." So saying, she at once left the room, as her attendant, who had heard every word that had passed, entered it.

My Lord Rich felt both confounded and humbled : he had never met with so stern a rebuff before ; he had never seen scorn look so beautiful in a female countenance.

He looked at the door as Geraldine slammed it behind her—then at the attendant ; drew himself up ; glanced once more at the casement, put on his hat with an air of assumed nonchalance ; affected to whistle some familiar tune, and walking out of the apartment, sallied forth into the street.

"Fore heaven," he said, "but yonder girl is a marvel of beauty, as well as boldness. I must possess her, if it costs me half my fortune. There is some mystery in this that I must fathom. She can hardly be the mistress of the player, or she would not have rejected

my offer. His relative perhaps? Well, we shall see. Corbelt shall find all out, and then look to thyself, my good Lady Disdain."

CHAPTER III.

My Lord Rich was not the man to be baffled. He was piqued and discomforted by the scorn and disgust Geraldine Maynard had displayed. It was true she evidently knew not his high rank, nor did he wish she should do so if he could help it. He was not the man to delay matters either ; infirmity of purpose being by no means one of his faults where the passions were concerned ; he resolved to seize the maiden, and carry her off at all hazards, and that, too, without delay.

To this end, as soon as he got home, Corbelt was again put upon duty, and sent

that very afternoon to the Blackfriars Theatre to make further inquiry.

* * *

Pierce Corbelt was a clever fellow in his own esteem, and in some things not the less thought of by others. He was a good blade, and "a tall fellow of his hands," and could crush a cup with any man.

As he passed along Chepe, he cudgelled his brain, and took thought more than once as to where first to begin his inquiries.

He entered several taverns, and quaffed a cup of canary with several thirsty souls, and elicited all he could regarding the Blackfriars, and the actors, and their doings and performances; for much as the citizens had lately turned their thoughts towards theatricals, indeed, ever since Master Shakspeare had remodelled, nay, almost created a new style of performance, Pierce Corbelt had hitherto troubled himself but little about such matters. He was indeed more a man for the dice box

or the tavern, than for anything intellectual.

After gathering all he could on the subject of the theatres and theatricals, he now set himself to find out something about Master William Shakspeare himself. To this end he looked about, up the thoroughfare and down the thoroughfare for some time, and as he did so, who should come pottering along with painful step and slow, but our old friend the apothecary of Blackfriars, and just as Pierce was about to accost him, he entered a small door over which a barber's pole was reared.

Congratulating himself on this lucky encounter, Pierce immediately followed, and entered the long low room where the clipper and trimmer of beards laboured in his vocation.

Our friend the apothecary was another man now to the starveling "the anatomy," our readers may remember to have before seen.

He had "bought food," and got himself up both "in flesh" and in every other way most marvellously. He walked with a firmer step, wore a better suit; his short coat, and slops were no longer in tatters, and his hosen had lost the miserable darns which they formerly owned. Shakspeare had stood his friend, found out his worth and truth, and cared for him accordingly.

As Corbelt entered the shop, the barber was just about to commence operations upon his thin and starved beard; for all men at this period, from the highest to the lowest, gave more or less attention to the ornament upon the chin.

As our court gallant walked into the shop, the barber, (a dapper little fellow), advanced and bowed, and demanded in what way he could serve him.

"How can I best serve your honour?" he said again, bowing low.

"By a twist of your curling tongs, and a

pinch of your whisker forceps," said Corbelt, throwing himself into a chair. "I am bound to the Blackfriars to-night, and a lady is in the case, so turn me out as attractive as you can. Master Shakspeare's play of Richard the Hunchback is to be enacted, I believe, is it not?"

"Most assuredly it is, an' it so please your honour's lordship; and right good stuff there is in it."

"A wonderful man that same Shakspeare," continued Corbelt, "according to all accounts. He seems much thought of in this part of the town, eh? There, you can go on with that customer; I can wait. A wonderful writer this same Master Shakspeare, I say; where did he come from; didst ever hear?"

The little barber, like most of his brethren, was fond of hearing himself hold forth. He felt delighted at the present opportunity, and answered with alacrity, letting out all he

knew, and something added on his own account.

Master Shakspeare, he said, as far as he had learnt his history, was from Warwickshire; nay, they do say forsooth, that had he not left those parts, he might have had a taste of the jail, the cart's tail, or the whipping post."

"What was his offence?" inquired Corbelt.

"Poverty and poaching, night riots, and all sorts of wild pranks and practices," replied the barber.

"What more dost know about him?" said Corbelt.

"Not much more," returned the barber.

"Is he married or single, think ye?"

"Married, they do say, and bath a shrewish wife; another reason why he fled his native town. He came here but a poor tatterdemallion; now forsooth he keeps company with the best. The Queen patronises him,

my Lord Southampton, Sidney, Raleigh, all love his rare wit and choice companionship."

"How is he derived, I mean what are his parents?"

"Oh, not much; his father was a glover, some say, at Stratford-upon-Avon, others affirm that he is a wool comber, and some say again that he keeps a butcher's shop in Henly Street in that same town, and that's about all I know about him, save and except that in Chepe there is not a tavern where he haunts that he does not keep it alive with his pleasantries and his good humour."

"And he's a rare fellow, too, I dare be sworn, amongst the bona robas," said Corbelt. "By the way, that is a rara avis, that bird he keeps caged in his house yonder, beside the river—"

"Ah, indeed," said the little barber, "I heard not of that before. Is there such a bird so encaged, think ye?"

"Most assuredly there is a lady in the case," said Corbelt, "and that this little gentleman in the short cloak and slops, and who I take to be a most profound philosopher and practioner of the healing art, can attest to the truth of, inasmuch as I one day saw him emerge from Master Shakspeare's dwelling."

The apothecary, who seldom cared for aught but professional interests and matters of pharmacy, pricked up his ears and replied somewhat tartly,

"An' your worship doth allude to Mistress Maynard, who presently resides under Master Shakspeare's roof, having been afflicted with illness; but now, thanks to the care I have bestowed on her, now I say nearly well. I must beg you to understand that I hear nought to the detriment of one so good and so virtuous. And for Master Shakspeare himself, heaven shield him from all harm. He is too good a man for aught in the shape of ill-report

to harm. Many is the poor host that hath cause to bless his charitable and dispensing hand."

"Well, well," interrupted Corbelt, "let him pass; I would fain know more of this Lindabrides, this companion of his. Who and what is she?"

"I reply to no scurrel jest at the expense of the good and virtuous," returned the apothecary; "an' you ask me concerning Mistress Maynard, I again tell you that she is as far as I know the niece of one Ralph Maynard, a miller, at Barnes in Surrey. She hath suffered from fever and other dangerous ills since she came to town. But is now so much recovered, thanks to my discovery of the quintessence of bark—a rare drug—that she goeth back to her friends on Wednesday next, as I am given to understand."

"So, so," said Pierce to himself, "that is the case, eh? Come, I have learnt some-

thing this morning, and my lord must look alive an' he means to clutch her whilst here in London. Farewell, comrades all," he continued rising, "I now must be jogging, I find, for there goes the clock in Old Pauls."

"But your lordship will surely have your moustache pressed and twisted a little more?"

"Not so," returned Corbelt, "I cannot now tarry longer. Farewell. Hold, here is a broad piece for your good intelligence."

"A tall gentleman," said the barber, looking at the coin, "and right civil withal. I marvel who he is. Some lord, I dare be sworn."

"Be you sworn to nothing of the sort, good Master Suddle," said the apothecary as he donned his hat. "That man's no good, be he who or what he may. Nay, I like not his bearing and his curiosity regarding my good and respected friend of the Blackfriars."

Marry, I will at once advise him of this cross questioning and these querries regarding Mistress Maynard."

CHAPTER IV.

FOR the last few days the poet had been absent from London. He had, indeed, been visiting some good friends he owned in the neighbourhood of Windsor, some well-to-do folks who dwelt near Datchet and Frogmore, a locality he much loved, and where on occasion of the Court being present at Windsor, he had made many friends, and was so much esteemed that his coming there was always looked upon as quite a blessing, and a hallowed period.

In that sweet locality Shakspeare had been sojourning some days, and on his return,

Mistress Bridget, his housekeeper, had informed him of the visit of the stranger who had behaved so rudely, as she considered, to his present visitor and charge, Geraldine Maynard.

Geraldine herself had almost forgotten the circumstance, and probably would not have mentioned it at all; she passed it by as the mere impertinence of a town gallant, who was half intoxicated when he intruded upon her.

The poet, however, who knew the wild nature of some of the hangers on of the Court, their unscrupulous deeds, and all the dangers of the time, thought more seriously of the matter, and desired his housekeeper to keep his doors for the future fast and secure, and allow no visitors to enter without she knew both themselves and their business, during his absence.

In the meantime, my Lord Rich had laid his plans so as to beat up the poet's quarters

in the night, and at all risk carry Geraldine off. Such an adventure in his eye was only one of those escapades in which he had oftentimes been mixed up, both on his own account and on that of others ; and accordingly, Pierce Corbelt was once more put upon duty, and instructed to provide a couple of sufficient companions to take part in the enterprise, and during the absence of the poet, surprise and carry her off. That done, she was to be brought by water to his lordship's house, also situate upon the banks of the Thames, a lone and dismal looking mansion, which had on many occasions been witness to his ugly doings.

It was on the very night of Shakspeare's unexpected return from Datchet, that the diabolical attempt was to be made.

The poet oftentimes was a frequent borrower from the night when he had work on hand. After his return from Old Windsor, on this night, as he sat beneath the chimney, his pen

still seemed to fly rapidly over the paper long after the chimes at midnight had warned him that it was time to seek his couch.

The weather was rough without; the wind blew over the waters, and the night was dark and dismal. Suddenly a boat stopped beneath the casement, and the rowers regarded the dim light which shone there for a few moments ere they landed at the stairs.

“ The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Did glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven.”

He was in a world of his own, and marked not the sounds beneath his window, or if so regarded them not,

“ Now o’er the one half world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain’d sleep.”

At this moment, the poet was suddenly

awakened from his abstraction by the sound of stealthy steps in the hall below. His pen was arrested, he lifted his head and listened attentively. His rapier lay upon the table, together with his castor—there where he had thrown them when he came in. He laid down his pen, reached over and clutched the weapon, just as the stealthy tread upon the wide staircase showed him that danger was at hand.

’Twas a lone situation ; no male was within that great rambling mansion but himself. His old housekeeper and his charge and visitor being buried in slumber. The most fearful deeds, “murders most foul, strange and unnatural,” were oftentimes perpetrated at that period and in that neighbourhood—that he well knew. Drawing his rapier he stepped to the door. He thought of Geraldine, the sweet sleeping Geraldine, but not of his own danger. He could not so well have drawn

the chivalrous and the bold had he been himself timid and fearful.

But no,

"The tiger's heart wrapp'd in a player's hide"

was there.

He stepped to the door as those without reached it. 'Twas a ticklish moment; he would have turned the key, but a hand without was laid upon the lock as he touched it. He stood aside, and drew back his rapier, as a tall figure with a black mask, with sword drawn, entered it. Scarcely had the intruder time to raise the dark lanthorn he carried, when the poet's rapier pierced his heart, and he fell forward into the room. The comrade behind, unconscious of what had occurred, but hearing the heavy fall, pushed on, and had also just entered, when he also fell pierced through the body.

A third now rushed into the room, saw

and seized the poet, grappled with him instantly, and would have driven his dagger into his vitals; but Shakspeare shortened his own blade, and wounded him also, and the fellow let go his hold, and together with another man who was in waiting in the corridor, turned, and both rushed down the staircase, and made their escape.

CHAPTER V.

THE poet heard their retreating footsteps with no slight satisfaction. He stepped to the table, took up the taper, and gazed upon the prostrate bodies of the slain, a sight sufficiently terrible. He advanced the light nearer to them, and then gazed upon their faces.

The first comer he recognised as that of one he had oftentimes observed when at the Palace at Richmond, a follower of some lord there. The other seemed a common cut-throat, hired perhaps for the occasion.

All had passed so silently and so quietly,

that save the heavy fall of the bodies of the slain, nought had occurred to disturb either Geraldine or her attendant, Mistress Bridget, who occupied a sleeping apartment at some little distance from the poet's room.

Being unwilling to shock the gentle Geraldine, or even Mistress Bridget with so terrible a sight, Shakspeare felt at first puzzled what to do. He hardly dared to leave the room, fearing some return of the ruffians; for whether their purpose had been plunder or what was their intent in thus invading his domicile, at first he could hardly surmise.

Whilst he deliberated, the side door opened, and Geraldine, who had hastily attired herself, suddenly appeared. She gazed with awe and astonishment at the poet as he stood with his drawn sword in his hand, and then at the bodies at his feet.

A few words explained matters, so far as he could explain them, and then he expressed

the dilemma he was placed in by the transaction.

"I must at once seek the city watch, and inform them of this affair," he said, "lest trouble otherwise should come upon me."

"I will remain on guard here whilst you do so," returned Geraldine, setting her lamp down upon the table.

"Darest thou so remain?" inquired Shakspeare in some surprise.

"For you I can dare anything," said Geraldine firmly.

"Brave girl; yet stay; I will furnish you with some defence while I am gone." He stepped to a cupboard, and brought forth a small dag or pistol. "Do you know how to use this weapon?" he inquired, as he handed it to her.

She smiled as she took it, and replied in the affirmative. Having oftentimes been out in the woods and fields with her cousins, she

well knew the use of such rude fire-arms as were then in vogue.

And thus whilst the poet sallied forth into the dark and dismal thoroughfares, and looked for the city watch, whose haunts, it must be confessed, he well knew, and whose nightly charge it was to perambulate the dangerous streets and alleys of Old London, Geraldine stood like a brave-hearted lass as she was, in close proximity to the slain, and awaited his return.

CHAPTER VI.

My Lord Rich, who had waited the event in his own boat, was terribly put out when he heard the result of this attempt. The loss of one of the men, an underling of Corbelt, was a severe blow to him, as he wanted all his instruments at this time, and as soon as he had embarked Corbelt and the two remaining myrmidons, he pulled off without delay, and returned with all the speed he could make to Whitehall.

Meantime, as a set off to his disappointment, the villain Corbelt now informed him

that his next effort against the fair Geraldine had better be made by water, inasmuch as the lady in question, he informed him, was expected to leave London for Fulham on that day week. She was to be conveyed so far by boat ; and accordingly the noble resolved that by water and on that day week, she should be assailed en route.

“ Yes, my good Lady Disdain,” he said to himself as he paced his chamber, “ on this day week you shall be caught and caged and tamed, or my name is not Rich.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE more Shakspeare had opportunity of studying the character of Geraldine Maynard, the more he found cause to admire and love her. To love her in spite of himself; for however he might school himself with the word propriety, and all that sort of thing, to one whose very life had been nipped in the bud, seared and blighted, "written down in sour misfortune's book;" even there where he had most looked for comfort and happiness. Who had been driven from his home as much by the ill conduct and continued persecution of a violent tactless woman—cursed,

yes, cursed and obnoxious as the wilful Kate of his own drama ; where, we say, fate had thus thrown him into contact with a female so sweet in disposition, so amiable, so unselfish, so impressed with his own desert, and withal so wonderfully gifted as Geraldine Maynard, he could hardly fail to love and honour her with a passion so ardent, that it pervaded every thought and act of his after life.

Meanwhile, Geraldine departed for her home on the day named, old Maynard and his son Hodge fetched her away, and it is needless to say how desolate the poet felt when she was gone. Her presence there had rendered the room where he sat and wrote, a paradise of content and happiness. If he paused and looked up as she stood by the casement, and laughed and chatted with old Mistress Bridget, or what was still more pleasant, copied some of his own sonnets, and which perhaps but for such care and supervision might have been blown to the winds, he

felt content and happy. Then to note her, in the intervals of his deep thought, and mark how she presided over his hitherto discomfortable life, and helped old Mistress Bridget to prepare his meals, for hitherto the tavern had been his usual refuge; to watch the fair Geraldine, and observe the way she went about when convalescent, and without effort ministered to his comfort and happiness, was indeed a pleasure.

“How angel like she sang too,
But her neat cookery. She cut the roots in
 character,
And sauced their broths as Juno had been sick.
 And she their dieter
 Nobly she yoked,
A smiling with a sigh as if the sigh
Was what it was, for not being such a smile.”

The poet stood with her in the deep embrasure of the ample window on the morning they were to part, ostensibly watching for the coming of Geraldine's friends. Talking

of indifferent subjects, but really with hearts ill at ease. With him, perhaps, the memory of hours misspent, the pang of affections misplaced or unrequited.

The poet looked at Geraldine and reflected how soon he was to be left desolate. Alas ! alas !

“How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,
Would then seem all the uses of the world.”

No word of either's feelings had ever passed their lips, and even now they talked of every-day matters. Suddenly the poet laid his hand upon the head of Geraldine as she looked innocently up and listened to his words, and then he spoke in the fullness of his heart.

“I have no right to love thee thus, Geraldine,” he said, after a pause. “’Tis folly—madness—presumption !”

Geraldine's eyes sparkled with joy.

“Presumption,” she said.

"Yes, thou art young, beautiful as the day. Thy life is all to come. Why should I mar it?"

"Do you mar it?"

"I hope not to do so. All I wish for is that the pleasant days we have once seen may return."

"They will do so, I know they will, and yet at times something like a dark cloud of evil to come overclouds my spirit."

Shakspeare turned from the window and paced the chamber.

"Geraldine, I must leave this spot, I cannot stay here when you are gone," he said, "nay, my way of life seems already broken up. You will go forth and be the admired of many, 'I cannot keep a corner in the thing I love.'"

"I do not comprehend your meaning," said Geraldine.

"Thou wilt have suitors, many. I feel I could not endure to see that. We have

met too late. We must part, sweet girl, yes—part for ever!”

“Part for ever!”

“Yes. The best wish I can give thee is that we may never meet again.”

“Oh, say not so. Why should we not be as of yore—friends, devoted friends? You are sad this morning,” she added, “cheer up, you will come and see us soon, very soon, the change will help to dispel these clouds.”

“I had made up my mind never to do so more.”

“Alas, then I will not leave thee, thou dear and valued friend. Why should I?”

“’Tis best so. We must part.”

“Why what is there of harm in my staying here to cheer the lonely hours of one so immeasurably above his fellows? What is there in me? Poor me! that I should cause one moment’s grief to such a man as thou art.”

“Look ye, Geraldine,” returned Shaks-

pere, "you are more than you seem—more than you think. You cannot see yourself with others eyes, even as I see you. So perfect in all things, so pure, so good, so true."

"You overestimate my poor gifts."

"No, I have esteemed many, none like thee. For several virtues have I loved several women."

"I should be vain indeed an' I thought that," said Geraldine. "'Tis thy own goodness which leads thee to hold so favourable an opinion of my deserts. But come, you must cheer up," she said, stepping to the table where the poet wrote. "Here you see I have left the papers you gave me and copied these sweet sonnets."

The poet took up the sonnets she had copied, and glanced at them. He then seized his pen and wrote some additional lines, and then he sat for some moments with his head buried in his hands.

Geraldine took up the paper and read the sonnet he had written, sighed and laid it down.

"We cannot, we must not part thus," she said, after a pause, and as she heard the sound of oars beneath the casement, and noted the well-known voice of her uncle as he hailed her from without.

"Hark! my uncle has arrived. I will not, I cannot depart unless you promise to revisit us speedily."

Shakspere stood and regarded her for a moment. There was no resisting so sweet a pleader.

"I can deny thee nothing," he said, "well, then, I must e'en promise. Come, let me bring thee so far on thy way. The boat awaits us on the stairs," he added, looking from the casement.

"Adieu, good Master Shakspere," said the Miller as he took his place in the boat. "We owe thee much, and at advantage

hope to repay all thy care. Adieu, thou wilt soon visit us I trust."

The poet stood upon the stairs, as the boat glided onwards. There was much traffic upon the river on this morning, and a good-sized barge, in which were several men, and which had, unnoticed, been lying near, now also gave way, and followed close upon the track of the Miller's smaller craft.

The poet marked it not. He stood and watched the one in which Geraldine was seated as long as he could see it, and waved his hand in answer to the handkerchief she waved to him.

"Senseless linen," he said, "happier therein than I. I could have broke mine eye-strings, crack'd them, but to look upon her, till the diminution of space had made her sharp as a needle. Nay, followed till she had melted from the smallness of a gnat to air."

When the boat disappeared, the poet

turned from the stairs and took his way across the bridge towards Southwark.

Meanwhile the worthy Miller and his stalwart son Hodge, and the waterman they had hired, pulled leisurely onward with their fair charge. The morning was fine, the row not so unpleasant, and they neared Chelsea Reach without impediment. As they did so, however, the waterman, who had been observing the boat full of men which had up to this time followed in their wake, and was now passing close beside them somehow seemed uneasy at this close attendance.

"I like not the look of yonder craft, nor the fellows in her, good Master Maynard," he said. "There's mischief brewing."

"Why, what's amiss?" inquired the Miller, looking steadily at the advancing boat, and watching it as it shot by.

"I hardly know what's amiss, but something is all wrong in yonder boat," iterated.

the waterman, "those chaps are up to no good. Heaven send they harm us not."

At this moment, the boat referred to and which had shot ahead, now turned, and to the surprise of Master Maynard pulled straight towards them.

Hodge, who was sitting in the bow, started up, but the next moment, as the boats came into collision, he was thrown headlong into the water.

The opposing boat was manned by six men. Two of them, profiting by the surprise of the Miller and his party, leapt into his boat, and whilst one of them threw himself upon the old man, the other seized Geraldine, jumped back into their own boat, and pulled off hastily towards London with their prey.

The old man sprang up, and rubbed his eyes as Hodge scrambled into the boat, and

seemed half bewildered with all that had occurred.

"Fore heaven, but this is strange conduct," he cried, as he seized an oar, and bade the waterman do the same. "Pull, man, pull!" he cried, "what the fiend does all this mean?"

"No good to the young woman," said the waterman, "I have seen some of those chaps before to-day. They belong to some powerful noble, Whitehall way, Heaven speed the poor young woman they have grabbed that's all."

"Lord save us, what mean ye?" exclaimed Maynard, now half maddened with rage. "Pull, man, pull! Here, Hodge, thou art younger and stronger than I, bear a hand, man, pull, I say, for very life!"

It was of no use, the well-manned barge of the ruffians soon distanced their pursuers, and Master Maynard and his son returned

home late that night in a state of bewilderment and grief beyond description.

Meantime the rowers of the opposing boat had made the best of their time. A cloak had been thrown over the head of the struggling Geraldine the moment she was captured, and she was held so tightly in the grasp of Master Corbelt, who had first seized her, that her struggles and efforts to free herself were vain.

They rowed steadily and rapidly on, passing Blackfriars, they then pulled up, and lay to for a few moments beside an old building, which seemed to have been erected in former days more for defence than comfort. Its buttressed walls, running down to the water's edge, and in the centre of the building a dark gateway, a sort of tunnel, was the only entrance from the river, and into this darksome entrance, after a short pause, the boat shot.

A stone staircase, which descended from the interior into the dark stream, was now dimly visible, and lifting Geraldine in his arms, assisted by another ruffian, Corbelt carried her up the stairs, traversed a long passage, and entered a chamber where they were received by a female who seemed to have been waiting their arrival.

As soon as they had removed the bandage from her face they returned as quietly as they had entered, and closed and locked the door behind them. The half bewildered Geraldine now looked around her, and seemed at first stupified with the whole affair. Rousing herself after a time, she turned her piercing gaze upon the female who stood before her, and gazed upon her for some moments, as some young eaglet or bird caged for the first time, might be supposed to look upon the companion of its new prison house.

“Who and what art thou, woman?” she said, after a long and scrutinizing survey,

"and what terrible place is this that I am brought to?"

The woman remained silent, and again Geraldine spoke to her.

"Who, I again say, are you?" she said, "and why am I brought here?"

Still no answer.

Geraldine turned deadly pale, as much from anger as dread. She looked around the stone walls, then at the one small window by which the light was only partially admitted, then at the iron lamp which hung from the arched roof of the apartment, and aided the window to light up the gloomy interior, and then she turned sick and faint.

"For Heaven's sake, good woman," she said, stepping close to the female and clasping her hands, "tell me the meaning of all this, and why I am brought into this terrible-looking place."

"Ah, now you speak like a decent, civil person," said the female, "and now, as

much as I may do so I will reply. Know, then, in the first place, that you are as secure in this house as bolts and locks can make you; you are, in short, under the protection of one whose ancestors have lived here in stirring times for centuries, a very noble gentleman."

"His name?" said Geraldine, quickly, and with her courage renewed. "Tell me, I entreat you, the name of this person."

"That, perhaps, you will some day learn from himself," said the female. "At any rate, he saves my labour, for here he comes."

As she spoke, a small door opened, and stooping his plumed castor, my Lord Rich entered the chamber. He doffed his hat and bowed low to Geraldine after entering, and by a sign signified to the attendant to leave the apartment, and then he addressed her in his usual high flown style.

"Most exquisite and unmatchable," he

commenced, advancing a few paces towards her.

Geraldine drew back as she recognized at once the person who had intruded upon her before.

"Most exquisite," he continued, "behold your devoted slave and admirer once again before you."

"Who and what are you?" she said disdainfully.

"Of that anon, sweet maid," he returned, "suffice it I am one who can and will do all I offered when I spoke as your suitor. Now I am your captor."

"Captor!" said Geraldine, "captor, I pray you to tell me my offence."

"Theft—robbery. You have stolen all I have worth having—my heart, lady, my heart. Such beauty I never before beheld, such beauty I feel that I must possess. When I first sought thee, I offered all I had in the world, now I offer myself."

"Hence, wretch, I will tear out the eyes that have, you say, attracted you,—disfigure my face, destroy every vestige of good favour that I possess—nay, kill myself, ere I will even hold converse with such a miscreant."

"All that will be cared for, lady," said the noble smiling. "You are in a secure hold here, my servants will watch over you and see to your safety in all things. Enough you are securely caged, naught can deliver you hence but yourself. Be but gentle, kind, and affectionate as you are lovely, and all shall be well. Refuse my behests and continue thus opposite, and you shall never see the outside of these walls again."

"My friends will proclaim this outrage to the Queen!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"How will they ever hear thy voice lady?" returned Lord Rich, "and who will they accuse?"

"Oh, Heaven! oh, misery!" cried Geraldine, "to what a fate am I reduced."

The Lord Rich stood and regarded the distraction of his captive for a few moments with increasing admiration. Then he resumed his beaver.

"I must now leave thee, fairest," he said, "for some hours at least, as I am in attendance upon one whom I dare not disappoint. Meantime, all, everything thou canst desire or wish for shall be given to thee for the asking."

My Lord Rich turned as he spoke and hastily left the room, whilst Geraldine, overcome by this terrible occurrence, knelt down and prayed aloud for deliverance from the terrible danger, which so unexpectedly and so suddenly had come upon her.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUEEN ELIZABETH, it is well known, was or pretended to be very delicate in her olfactory nerves. One day at Richmond whilst she held what we should in these days call a drawing-room, Sir Rogers Williams, a very valiant Welch commander, knelt to present a petition, which Her Majesty was beforehand fully determined neither to receive nor to grant. As the Welchman, in true sailor-like fashion, had come to Court in rather a rough costume, having on boots made of rough untanned leather, Her Majesty took that opportunity of evading his suit, and

pushing away his petition turned her head with a gesture of extreme disgust.

"Pooh ! Williams," she said, " I marvel at your boldness. Take that scroll hence and go hence yourself; your boots offend our nostrils, go."

"Tut, tut, madam," replied the sturdy commander, "'tis not my boots that are so unsavoury, but my suit."

Her Majesty, it must be confessed, was exceedingly eccentric at times. At one moment she would put her courtiers, attendants and servitors on the alert as if she intended to go forth to some pastime or sport, and then, when all was prepared, horses, dogs, falconers, servitors, &c., &c., in waiting, she would as suddenly change her mind, doff her riding gear, and betake herself to her chamber. This was especially the case when she took a fresh fit of affection for any of her handsome courtiers or attendant nobles.

Sir Philip Sidney was still the favourite at this time; but to her annoyance she had lately found that, albeit she had helped to break the neck of one projected marriage, another match was on the very point of taking place—nay, the very day was fixed on which that knight was to lead the lovely Frances Walshingham to the altar at Barnes Church.

After the morning audience, which in those days took place at an early hour, Her Majesty suddenly announced that she intended to go forth and shoot the stag in the forest without.

As Her Majesty was this morning rather in a perturbed state, the attendant nobles and their attendant servitors, made all haste to ring out their bugles, and get out their steeds as quickly as might be. Suddenly, however, the whole court-yard of the palace being alive with the brilliant throng, Her High Mightiness as quickly turned upon

her heel and announced that she would not budge a foot from the Pleasaunce.

She wished for the attendance of her cup-bearer in the gardens, there to read to her some of those exquisite poems he had lately written in her condign praise :

"O spirit of love how quick and fresh art thou.

* * * *

Will you go hunt, my Lord ?

What, Curio ?

The hart.

Why, so I do—the noblest that I have.

* * * *

Enough, no more,

Away before me to sweet beds of flowers,

Love thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers."

Certes Her Majesty seated herself in a most lovely bower, close to the river's bank, what could be more pleasant, more conducive to love thoughts.

She awaited the messenger who had been dispatched in quest of her cup-bearer, the all-conquering Sidney. Sir Walter Ra-

leigh, who had been that messenger, returned with intelligence that Sir Philip Sidney was not at that moment in attendance at Richmond. At all events one of his own servants had surmised that as his marriage was so near at hand, he would most likely be found at the mansion of his intended father-in-law, even at Walshingham House, on Barnes Common.

The Queen sprang up in most unqueenly fashion. The name of any marriage but her own sufficed to drive her frantic at this time. She bent an angry eye upon her late favourite.

"'Tis like you all," she said, "ingrates that you are. Go," she added, waving her hand, "go, Sir Walter, reassemble the huntsmen. I have changed my mind, and will go forth to hunt the stag."

* * * *

The solemn huntings of princes and great lords at this period, were very different affairs

from the same sports in our own times. The chase, in Elizabeth's day, was not a tremendous burst for an hour or two as it is now. There was dignity, grandeur, and harmony in every sound of the ancient hunt.

"When skies and fountains every region near,
Seem'd all one mutual cry."

To hawk, to hunt, to shoot the stag, to course the hare, were pastimes in which Master William Shakspeare of the Blackfriars and Globe did much delight, and doubtless did most heartily engage in—when he could. On this very morning he had been summoned by my Lord Southampton to Richmond Palace, on matters connected with a play Her Majesty wished especially to have enacted, and as he had obeyed her summons and received his orders, he could scarce refrain from accepting the invitation of his especial patron and joining in the cry.

There in the bright sunshine, four or

five miles from the Palace, where the gnarled oaks threw their broad arms over the fern, after a goodly gallop and the death of the poor dappled deer, Her Majesty alighted in order to take a small taste of the refreshments her attendants had, according to custom and observance, brought with them; and now she resolves to shoot a buck with her own hand.

"Twas a lovely wooded scene, as Elizabeth, cross-bow in hand, took her stand with her keepers, the rest standing aloof that they might not scare the herd; Shakspeare looking on.

"Under the thick grown brake we'll shroud ourself,
For through this place, anon, the deer will come,
And in this covert, we will make our stand,
Culling the principal of all the deer.

Come, Forester, my friend, where is the bush—
That we must stand and play the murderer in."

Such was doubtless the scene on this occasion.

The noble art of venerie would seem to have been a good excuse for daffing the world aside, and spending whole days under the greenwood tree.

Such a scene must indeed have been delicious to look upon, when royalty mustered her followers, and all was grand, stately, and imposing.

The attendant throng of servitors and huntsmen, with hounds, and hangers-on, and steeds, stood somewhat aloof in the back-ground, and still the Queen, bow in hand, stalked the herd and continued the sport, so that it was not until the "moon,"—"the inconstant moon," had asserted her reign, that the cavalcade quitted the woodlands, and traversing the margin of the silver stream, returned towards Richmond.

They filed into the court-yard of that noble-looking pile, quite filling it up, as Her Majesty prepared to dismount. The ever ready Leicester and my Lord South-

ampton standing bare-headed to help her from her palfrey.

Suddenly, just without the gate-house, on the town side, a great commotion was heard, a loud voice demanding admittance, and the gate-house guard and several others denying it.

"You cannot come within the court, I tell thee," said one of the huge porters, "thrust him back, sentinel, thrust him through with your partisan."

"Don't tell me about standing back," cried old Maynard, the miller of Barnes, for it was he who was trying to thrust his burly body in amongst the throng. "Don't tell me, I will see and speak to the Queen herself, I say, spite of all the guards in the palace."

The Queen turned her head as she was about to dismount, and inquired the meaning of the turmoil.

"'Tis my father," said our friend George

Maynard, now one of the yeomen of the guard.
"Some grievous wrong hath been done him,
and he would fain crave speech with your
royal self."

Leicester and Burleigh immediately inter-
fered.

"These are not times to admit strangers
so near your royal person," said Leicester.
"Allow me to order him to the guard-house
till we learn the meaning of his rude be-
haviour."

"Not so," returned the Queen, "we have
a better opinion of that same Miller of
Barnes than of many here around us.
Admit him to the presence at once."

Master Maynard, meantime, had almost
shaken himself free of those who still held
him, and who, now that he was to be
admitted to speech with Her Majesty would
fain have advised him especially how to bear
himself and to pay proper respect.

"Tut! tut! Tell me not of such matter,"

said the burly Miller. "I have seen the Queen before to-day, and she has seen me. We are neither of us either so well favoured or so young as we once were. Stand aside and let me pass. Shade my eyes with my hand, quotha! By the Lord, I'll sooner smash thy chops with it. No, no, none of your lies and flattery, and double dealing for old Hugh Maynard of Barnes.

"Most mighty Princess," he commenced, as he at length got near the Queen, and as she still remained in the saddle. "Behold a man wronged by some of the scoundrels who attend upon your Majesty's Court here."

The Queen looked the astonishment she felt at the Miller's bold bearing, but she loved a bold, honest heart, and she forbore comment.

"Stand forth, Master Shakspeare," continued the excited old man, "for I see thou art here amongst the throng, and tell how

thou sawest myself and my niece set forth from thy dwelling, and that on her way we were assailed, and my niece seized and carried off by ruffians."

"Seized and carried off by some of my people," said the Queen. "How is this, my Lord Leicester, doth any one here know aught of this matter. Speak man, hast thou any suspicion as to the offending party?"

"By're, lady, I would I had," exclaimed Maynard, "all I know is, that I am told it is some silken slave of the Court, and I demand justice on his vile head. Oh, me, my niece! my Geraldine! my more than daughter, the light of my old eyes, what hath become of thee?"

And then the old man wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his doublet and mopped his perspiring head.

Shakspeare was astonished and aghast.

His absence from London had hindered him from all knowledge of this terrible

event till it was thus abruptly divulged. The attempt upon his house a few nights before flashed across his brain as he listened, and he looked around the throng inquiringly, doubtingly. He half suspected one usually about the Court. On this night, however, he saw him not there.

"What can I do for thee, old man?" inquired the Queen, "surely no one connected with my Court here would dare to attempt such an outrage as you have described."

"Your Majesty is very good. In good sooth I hardly know what to say or what to do; my niece is taken from me, that's quite certain, and my house is put to shame. I know not what your Majesty can do for me or what to do for myself."

"Do you suspect any one in particular, I again ask?" said the Queen, after a pause.

"No, not I," returned old Maynard, "who should I suspect?"

"Then, why have you come to me?"

"As to the friend of thy people," he said quickly, "for help, for advice, O Lord, I shall go mad an harm come to my Geraldine, and harm hath certes come to her, of that I be assured."

"Have you no clue, either?"

"No, the barge that run us down was like the boats that I have seen accompany your Majesty upon the water, gilded and ornamented prow and stern, and the rascals in it were beruffed and befeathered like some of these gentlemen around us here. That's all I know. One of the caitiffs—the fellow who first jumped into our boat and seized my niece—him I did catch a glimpse of, and, by're lady, I think I should know him again. That's about all do I know. Oh dear! oh dear! What shall I do? what shall I do?"

The Queen felt quite moved at the old man's distress.

"We will most assuredly look to this matter, and sift it thoroughly," she said, "fore heaven, such doings are a disgrace to the land. My Lord of Leicester, you will at once make every inquiry into the circumstances attending this shameful transaction. Set some of the city officials on the alert, I would not have harm come to this poor old man's niece on any account. Good Master Maynard," she added, again addressing the Miller, and preparing to dismount, "be assured we are full deeply grieved at what you have told us here, and will do all in our power to find your niece, and severely punish the caitiffs who have abducted her. My Lord of Leicester here hath an order to see into the matter, and bring us all intelligence without delay, and so farewell, for this time."

"My Lord of Leicester is doubtless good, very good!" returned the Miller, and your

Majesty is good toe. But, body o' me!" he muttered, as he donned his castor, "I fear I shall get little redress from either the one or the other, after all."

The Miller now made his bow and turned to depart; the courtiers and attendants who had stood around whilst he was addressing the Queen, drew back to let him pass. As they did so, his keen, quick eye caught sight of some person who stood amongst the falconers and huntsmen near the gate-house. He sprung towards him in an instant.

"Yield thee, thief," he said, seizing Peirce Corbelt by the ruff which he crushed up in his grasp. "Fore heaven, I know thee now! Thou art the very man who boarded my craft, and carried off my child."

Corbelt, who was a powerful fellow, at first threw the Miller off, and would fain have turned and gained the outside of the

gates. But Maynard was not to be denied; he seized the partisan from the hands of his son George, who was near him at the moment, and with one blow felled the miscreant to the earth, following up his blow the Miller would have thrown himself upon Corbelt and strangled him; but the bystanders in turn here interfered, seized him, and held him apart.

"The man is surely mad," said the head huntsman, who with several others now closed around him. "Thrust him from the gates. Master Corbelt is stunned with the blow he has dealt him over the costard."

"Unhand me, rascals!" cried the Miller, "I tell you that fellow is one of the caitiffs who boarded my boat and carried off my niece."

"To the foul fiend with your niece and yourself too!" cried another of the servitors. "The man's demented, thrust him forth."

Several of the gate-house guard were now about to lay hands on Master Maynard, and

would have used him somewhat roughly; but his son George desired them to stand off, and taking his father by the arm, persuaded him to leave the court-yard; Master Shakspeare, too, at this moment coming up, the old man allowed himself to be persuaded, at the same time protesting that the caitiff who he had smote, he was quite certain was one of the abductors of his niece.

“I will myself at once see to it,” said Shakspeare, “and after making inquiry will return with you to Barnes. Prithee be calm and content, good Master Maynard, and leave the matter in my hands.”

The old Miller, now that a reaction had taken place, permitted himself to be led from the Palace by his son George, and Shakspeare soon afterwards rejoining him, they set forth towards Barnes without delay.

CHAPTER IX.

It was late when Master Maynard and his friend Shakspeare arrived at the cottage of the former at Barnes Common. The poet found a changed house now to the one he had left some little time before—all seemed so desolate, so wanting in everything, she who used to be its presiding genius was gone, and its charm seemed departed. There was the old dame, busy as ever, trying to make all comfortable, for if the truth must be told, albeit she was sufficiently aggrieved and affrighted at the

abduction of her niece, she felt it not so keenly as the men folk.

The old Miller, as he entered, threw his cap upon the floor beside him, sat down in his old chair, and again buried his face in his hands. His dame meantime doing her best to try and cheer him, and place before himself and guest the best her cookery and her cottage could afford.

“Now was she at the upper end o’ the table—now i’ the middle,

Her face o’ fire,

With labour, and the thing she took to quench it—
And then to see how she would to each one sip.”

Master Shakspeare, when a lad, in Warwickshire, had doubtless seen many an old wife as bustling and as good at heart; one who put aside her own griefs to give a hearty welcome to her husband’s return. See her moving about, now here, now there, on his shoulders, then on his.

“Come, neighbour, this beef lay in corn .

for a whole fortnight, I cured it myself. Try this cheese-cake. Husband, come, cheer thee, good heart. Grief and woe never did good yet that ever I heard of. Fore me, this pasty is too long i' the oven. Come on, come on, just a glass to cool thee. Ah me, my poor niece, how she would have tried to welcome thee, Master Shakspeare, for she loved dearly to see thee in this house."

Shakspeare started as she spoke. He had been watching the old Miller's grief, now he again remembered Geraldine as he had seen her there.

"The prettiest low-born lass
That ever ran on the green sward."

It might be that her image became clothed in after years with the matured richness and immortal poetry he has thrown around her, when he shadowed forth a form too pure, too good to belong to earth, and threw

around the memory of this period of his life a divinity that belongs to Heaven.

* * * *

Master Shakspeare waited but to see that his friend the Miller was getting more composed, and then he took the old dame aside, and commending him to her especial care with the advice both to herself and Hodge to keep him at home if possible, he prepared to depart for London with all speed.

"I have carefully noted the man you suspect," he said to the Miller, as he shook him by the hand, "and given secret instructions to one I can trust to have a sharp eye upon him, and watch his every movement. He is, I find, a follower of my Lord Rich, a man fully capable of any deed of ill-omen. He hath a rendezvous in London near my own lodging. With all speed I can make, I will return to town."

"I would thou hadst not been absent,

good Master Shakspeare," said Maynard dolefully, "I sought thee on the day following the one that Geraldine was carried off high and low, but could by no means hear of your whereabouts."

"Alas, I am grieved that I left London at such a time. But, farewell, every minute is now of consequence. If I live I will return soon, and by Heaven's blessing, with some good tidings to cheer this house."

CHAPTER X.

AFTER Lord Rich left Geraldine Maynard, she knelt down and offered up a prayer to that Being who, in all our troubles and adversities, we can only truly look to for aid and assistance. She then rose, and more carefully noted the chamber she was in. Its aspect, upon a closer examination, seemed even more ominous than a first glance had rendered it. Its walls were of stone, the arras hanging before them was old and faded; the very flooring was dilapidated and uneven from age and wear. The place was evidently one of the strongholds

of former days, the room had two entrances and but one window, which was up high, and secured by iron bars like a prison; the doors were of oak, one seemed to lead to the corridors and passages without, the other was a smaller entrance, probably leading by a staircase to some turret chamber, which was indeed the case, as Geraldine afterwards found. Two cumbrous chairs, a heavy oaken table, a settle before the chimney, and a square-topped bed with dark taffety curtains, which bed occupied one corner of the dismal room, were all the articles of furniture within this room.

After her captor had departed, the attendant brought a silver salver containing some wine and other liquors, and also a small pasty, and then she again left her.

Geraldine at first eyed these appliances askance, with a look of disgust; but on after thought she resolved to partake of the food thus placed before her.

"I may want all my strength and courage," she said to herself, "to enable me to escape the perils I am surrounded by; at any rate starvation will scarcely aid me here."

As she said this she poured herself out a glass of sherry, and also ate sparingly, more from duty than appetite, from the pasty before her; and then again she knelt down and prayed for aid from danger. As she did so she felt comforted and reassured. She put her hand into the bosom of her bodice to pluck forth her kerchief to dry her eyes, and clutched the keepsake she had till that moment utterly forgotten, although she had constantly worn it since her esteemed friend had made her a present of it. The small dag* or pistolette which Shakspeare had presented her with on the night of the attack upon his own house.

"Ah," she said as all her courage returned,

* Small pistols at this period were termed dags.

“the good God, who protects the unfortunate, will not let me be harmed I see. Here is a friend in need, given to me in order that I may save all that is dear to me, and even life itself.”

She took the pistolet in her hand, and examined its priming, and then looked carefully to the rude lock, and then replaced it in her bosom, and then she sat down with her face towards the window and quietly awaited what was to come. She sat there for some time, and marked the varying aspect of the heavens as the clouds moved swiftly onwards, and felt they were the only companions in her solitude,* and then her thoughts once more became gloomy and sad.

How many poor wretches, she thought, at that moment like herself were hopelessly in-

* Those who have passed their lone hours in exile well know what company the clouds are, and what varying amusement they afford.

closed between stone walls. Some for years, nay, some from youth to old age, had pined in damp, solitude in the dungeons of the Tower, beneath the level of the river.

How if she herself, thus entrapped, were to die hopelessly in that prison house? How if the despicable villain who had her then in his power, in order to carry out his villainy were to put her to silence in that fearful den? Her dear friends grieving for years over her loss, and never knowing, or even surmising what her ultimate fate had been.

She was in the very part of London where in those rude times the most horrible crimes were nightly perpetrated. As she thought over these matters again, her heart sank and her spirit quailed. Solitary confinement is a sufficient depresser. As the day passed and the shadows deepened, she felt that even the companionship of the female who had attended her would be more agreeable than utter solitude in such a place; perhaps it

was the purpose of her captor to quell her high spirit by thus leaving her to herself, or perhaps he was detained on state affairs. Be that as it may, poor Geraldine saw "the light thicken," and the moon arise through the bars of the window, and still she sat there, sad, solitary, and filled with apprehension.

Faintly upon the breeze came the midnight chimes in old London, and still she determined not to trust herself to sleep or to lay down upon that square topped, stately-looking bedstead. Still as the night wore on a heavy summons lay like lead upon her eyelids, and spite of all her efforts to keep awake, she dropped off into a fitful slumber. Suddenly the larger door was thrown open, and Lord Rich entered the apartment and approached her.

He stopped for a moment as she started from her seat, and drew back, and stood in affected or real admiration, and again his

language was couched in the complimentary strain, it was his wont apparently to address to all females.

"You will forgive my seeming neglect, sweet bird," he said, "and my having so long left you in this dreary solitude. I come now to make amends, to be thy companion, and to lead thee hence to a more fitting residence."

Geraldine saw in a moment, not only by the way in which he spoke, but by his unsteadiness as he stood before her, that he was somewhat flustered with wine; most likely come from some banquet where he had drank more deeply than he had intended; at any rate she felt the utmost dread of him as he stood and glared upon her, and again she drew back as he approached.

"Come," he said, "we must have no coy behaviour here. I come, I tell thee, to make thee a queen of wealth, as you are already a queen of beauty. Receive the love

I offer without forcing me to use ungentle means. You must be my wife in all but the ceremony; that, unfortunately, I cannot offer thee. All else I possess is yours."

"Miscreant!" said Geraldine, "I have before told thee I will die ere I become the prey of such a villain. Restore me to my friends, or leave me here as thou wilt, to starve piece-meal, or stab me with the weapon which is dishonoured by hanging at thy side; do any dastardly deed so you but quit my sight without further parley."

Lord Rich turned pale with ire. He had never met with such a female, or such a rebuff before.

"Thou art over bold, fair lady," he said. "But in this house we will find the means to tame that spirit. Thou art in my power; no cry could ever be heard without these walls. Once more, yield thee to my suit, or take the consequences."

He rushed upon her as he spoke, and seized her in his arms. Geraldine was strong, she held him back ; but my Lord Rich was a tall and powerful man. He grasped her too firmly for her to escape. She wasted not her strength in unavailing screams as one more timid would have done, but disengaging her right hand she plucked the pistol she had concealed in her bosom and fired it.

So closely and tightly was she held that she could not obtain room to direct the muzzle to his breast, she was, however, fortunate enough to wound him in the left shoulder severely.

The dastard noble felt the shock, and was almost blinded by the smoke, as Geraldine now with a renewed effort freed herself from his grasp, and threw him from her somewhat sobered and bleeding.

"Wretched girl," he said, "you have shot me."

"Thanks be to Heaven an' I have," said

the undaunted Geraldine, "to rid the world of such a miscreant would indeed be a good deed."

As she said this she now attempted to reach the door; but Lord Rich threw himself before it.

"I bleed," he said, grinding his teeth with rage, "still I am not so disabled as you think. You escape not this bout. My people below shall care for that. What, ho! Pierce," he called aloud. "Come up with all speed. I am shot by this wilful jade here."

Pierce Corbelt, who was in attendance below with another of the noble lord's creatures, upon this summons soon made his appearance.

"This pestilent shrew," said his lordship, "carries fire-arms about her person, and hath shot me. Prithee secure the door, and help me to a chamber below."

The servitor looked astonished, and my lord

looked faint. Corbelt secured the door, and assisted Lord Rich to descend to an apartment in the lower part of the building, where he proceeded at once to take off his doublet and examine the hurt.

The bullet, luckily for his lordship, was a small one, and the wound bled much.

At that period, men were tolerably *au fait* at the smaller matters of surgery, and accordingly Corbelt proceeded to staunch the blood and bind up the wound.

"It's not much, my lord," he said. "Luckily the bone seems to be uninjured, and the ball has, I think, passed through your lordship's arm."

"I tell thee what, Corbelt," returned his lordship, "it's a d—— unlucky accident, be it what it may, happening just now, too, when I have so much on hand. Give me a cup of wine, for I feel sick. May the foul fiend take the jade. She seems fated to bring evil upon us both. Fill again, this faintness

increases. Another cup for the love of Heaven, or I shall swoon outright."

"Perhaps I had better send Hugh out in search of some leech," said Corbelt, who began to feel alarmed.

"No; I will not have any stranger admitted into this house," continued his lordship. "I will presently take boat and return to Whitehall."

"And how about the hurt, my lord," "what shall we say about that?" inquired Corbelt.

"It must pass for an affair of honour," returned Lord Rich. "You must give out that I was invited forth and wounded. But that the affair is a secret. Yes, we must turn it to account of some slight word spoken of Lady Devereux, which I have resented; and so far make our mishap a benefit. She hath looked but coldly upon me of late. The nearness of this marriage of Sir Philip Sidney touches her, I opine, and, doubtless, the

turn of a straw would upset all my plans in that quarter, for she still affects and pines after that starched and puritanical knight."

"And yet your lordship makes the risk all the more by your pursuit after this wilful minx here. Would it not be better to turn her adrift and get quit of this business whilst we are so far safe?"

"No," returned his lordship sharply. "My feelings are touched, I will not be baffled by such a chit. Come on't what will, I am resolved to lower that proud spirit to the very dust ere I have done with her. Besides, the beauty of the girl hath touched me, I ne'er looked upon her like; the spirit and the resolution she has displayed rather inflames my love for her."

Corbelt shrugged his shoulders. "I wish your lordship well out of the matter," he said. "For mine own part I distrust the affair from beginning to end. The girl hath good and resolute friends, and is greatly

thought of, I hear, in the neighbourhood of Barnes, where she lived."

"I care not what thou sayst," returned Rich. "We have laid our plans so well that I defy discovery. She shall remain here at present, and anon you must convey her to my house in Kent, where when better I will again see her; meantime give instruction to Mistress Mabel to tend her well and let her want for nothing. To-morrow night she shall hence."

"Your lordship feels much recovered."

"I do so. You must presently assist me to my boat at the stairs, and I will return to Whitehall."

CHAPTER XI.

"AT lovers' perjuries Jove laughs," 'tis said.

If so, certes, the thunderer must have been amused at the state of affairs, the jealousies, the fears, and the continual *contre-temps* between the four lovers we have already had occasion to speak of in this veritable story. Certain it is that no four persons could have been about to be united in the silken bonds of Hymen with whom Cupid had in reality so little sympathy or influence.

Two of the party would seem to be about

to marry from absolute spite and jealousy ; one from sheer chagrin and despair, and another from mixed feelings of love and hate, and in order to triumph over a rival.

Sir Philip Sidney desperately in love with Penelope Devereux, to whom he had given his heart almost from childhood, was about to lead to the altar Frances Walshingham, a lady he could not choose but esteem and respect out of opinion of her many and apparent virtues. Whilst she who he really loved, was at the same time about to be united to a man she could hardly either love or esteem out of sheer jealousy, coupled to some touches of resentment, and, perhaps, a very little of love and affection for the riches her new lover was in possession of. For my Lord Rich was a millionaire of his day, possessing many splendid estates, besides the command of ready money to a great amount ; all which made him appear a dazzling and a desirable suitor to the relatives and friends of

the Lady Devereux, and caused them to look over and negative certain rumours as to character, the which indeed, ought to have been of more importance in their eyes than all the wealth in the world.

* * * *

Acting upon his resolve, my Lord Rich did indeed turn his wound "to commodity," as Falstaff words it. He rounded a tale in his fair lady's ear which did him service in her esteem.

On his return to the neighbourhood of the Court, where he was obliged to lay up and submit to surgery, he managed to persuade his intended that from some light word which had been uttered by a friend of Sidney's against her fair fame, he had been engaged in a duel and got wounded in defence of her honour.

All women appreciate such sacrifices ; and the Devereux accordingly both felt and ex-

pressed her thanks, at the same time she fully agreed that such matter should be kept as secret as possible.

"Sir Philip Sidney," she said, tossing her beautiful head, whilst a tear stole down her cheek, "shall find that in matters of contempt I can be equal with him. Neglect me, lose me ; and so hath he found."

"Most right, most true, most exquisite," replied Rich. "This overbearing knight, methinks, out of his pride and vanity because, forsooth, Her Majesty hath so far favoured him, imagined, perhaps, that like a spaniel you would fawn upon him. Come, lady, you have been somewhat cross and opposed hitherto when I have asked you to fix the day. Sir Philip is to be married, 'tis said, on Wednesday next ; may I say that next month shall behold our nuptials?"

The Lady Devereux gave him her hand to kiss.

"Ask me that question on Thursday

next and I will give you an answer," she replied. "Meantime, look to your health, and recover from this hurt with all speed. Her Majesty goes to Windsor to-morrow, I am commanded to be in attendance the day after, so farewell for the present."

The fair Devereux, who, with her friend and chaperone Lady Lennox, had thought proper to pay this visit to her intended on hearing of his wound, as she took her way to her apartments in Whitehall, had fully made up her mind that she would now really and truly fix a day for her marriage with this bold, bad man. For hitherto, albeit she had suffered herself to be engaged at the earnest desire of her parents, and in order to vent her spleen upon her former lover; of late certain "compunctious visitings" had tormented and unsettled her; so much so, that had not this pretended duel and wound impressed and interested her in his favour, it is possible

her courage would have failed at the last moment.

Now, however, she felt so grateful to his lordship, that she resolved, come what might, the marriage should speedily take place. The miscreant had indeed turned his mishap to commodity, and won golden opinions from his mistress thereby.

* * * *

Meantime, his lordship was now almost on his legs again, albeit the wound had given him no little pain and some anxiety. His medical attendant, who wished to make himself as important as possible, having magnified the hurt into something serious, in order to enhance his own skill in its treatment.

Master Corbelt, also, who was always on the alert, brought him daily the news of all that happened whilst he was thus laid by the heels, and also by his master's command paid frequent visits to Geraldine in her prison-house. Corbelt was

also directed to keep a good look-out amongst the followers of the Court, so that if anything transpired there, he might be ready for all emergencies.

Thus several days had passed, up to the very evening of the royal hunt, when Master Maynard, having recognized his hang-dog visage, as he was skulking, according to orders, about the court-yard, broke his pate across with his son's partisan, and all but apprehended him.

On that evening, his lordship being at his lodgings at Whitehall, and so far recovered as to have left his bed for an hour or two, the caitiff hastily presented himself in most rueful plight, with bandaged head and pallid cheeks.

Lord Rich started as the scoundrel entered, and, doffing his castor, showed his bandaged head and blanched face, and after looking at him for a few moments, burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

Corbelt was put out rather at his ill-judged mirth.

"Your lordship may laugh as much as you like," he said bitterly, "you are likely, however, to have all the pleasantry to yourself, for my head and face is so battered that I should crack my cheeks across, an' I were but to grin—granting a man could grin at his own distress and disgrace."

"Why, what in the name of all the fiends in the pit of Acheron has happened?" inquired his lordship.

"Matter enough," sulkily returned the official. "Broken, bruised, and battered, I have been all but arrested."

"At whose suit?" said the peer, again with difficulty stifling a laugh.

"At the suit of a pestilent knave," returned Corbelt, getting still more annoyed at his lord's apparent unconcern.

"I am still puzzled in what cause," said Lord Rich, who imagined his steward

had got into some drunken brawl, a matter by no means uncommon with him.

"In the same cause that your lordship received a bullet in your shoulder," said Corbelt.

"How," said Lord Rich, turning more serious, "in the cause of Geraldine Maynard say ye?"

"The same," said Corbelt, coolly.

"She hath not escaped, villain," said his lordship, starting up and confronting his steward.

"No. But I almost wish she had, for I can see naught but ill-luck and mishap to us both whilst she remains on our hands."

His lordship returned to his seat.

"Heed thou not that," he said. "Be it my task to care for her; and now tell me how this broken pate of thine hath come about."

Corbelt now told his employer the story

of his wrongs, and how the uncle of Geraldine had recognized and stricken him down.

Lord Rich could hardly choose but again laugh, albeit he felt both annoyed and alarmed.

"It was not according to your usual shrewdness, Corbelt," he said, "to allow your visage to be seen, either when you made the capture, or when on duty at Richmond. It may bring us both, as you say, into question about this affair."

"Nay, but I question whether it hath not already done so," said Corbelt, "especially as this pestilent miller, whose arm is like a smith's hammer, hath actually made complaint to the Queen."

"To the Queen?" said Lord Rich, "you do not mean that he hath had access to Her Majesty?"

"Even so," said Corbelt, "he thrust him-

self in amongst the throng, pushed his way up to her Majesty, and called for justice at her hands. Accusing some one about her person of having carried the girl off."

"I like not this," said Rich. "It may indeed lead to discovery, especially so as you were recognized by this blustering Miller too."

The official felt pleased that his lordship was now truly alarmed. Such being the case, he again urged,

"I advise your lordship to let this pestilent jade out of durance and be rid of her."

"Again I tell thee, dolt and idiot that thou art," returned his lordship, "that I will by no means do so, and I tell thee again, that my feelings are so far touched, so interested in the matter, that I will pursue her to her utter despite and destruction."

"Be it as your lordship wishes, then," said Corbelt. "All I can say is, that we both of us cut a sorry figure. May the foul fiend take the girl who hath so treated us both."

"Harkee," said his lordship, "I have been thinking that it were best at once to remove the shrew from her present residence. I did intend to wait a day or two, but as things stand, I think thou hadst better have her conveyed into Kent at once."

"To the moated house near Rochester?"

"The same. There she will be as secure as strong walls and the surrounding swamps can make her; and there will I again visit her when somewhat more restored."

"At your lordship's pleasure," said Corbelt, "so let it be. I am to attend to the matter at once then."

Soon after this was settled, as his lord-

ship felt somewhat fatigued with the discussion, he retired to his couch, and his attendant left him.

CHAPTER XII.

WE must now return to Geraldine Maynard, who, after the adventure we have recorded in a former chapter, remained a close prisoner in her solitary chamber.

All the recreation and change she was allowed, being an occasional walk upon the leads of one of the towers of the building. This indulgence was, by Corbelt's directions, offered her by the attendant female, who alone waited upon her more as a command than an invitation.

But even this was a recreation and a blessing to the prisoner in her solitary and

miserable condition. The tower was battlemented, and although the "roundure of its old faced walls," was washed by the waves of the river, still unless a person contrived to thrust himself quite forward through an opening in the battlements, it would be almost impossible to be seen from the river.

Poor Geraldine, albeit, she was well watched by her female attendant, managed to mount the platform with which the tower was accommodated, and peer down from the dizzy height. Nay, more than once, a determination to cast herself headlong had pervaded her mind, and then again her religious feeling, and the "Canon which the Everlasting has fixed against self-slaughter," caused her to pause, and cast away such thought.

Whilst she breathed the fresh and balmy air which blew from the Surrey hills, and thought of her own sweet home amidst the bowery scenes of Sheen, and neighboured

by the forests and glades of Richmond. Scenes at that period, so redolent of woodland beauty, and the park-like haunts of royalty. Scenes, where in all the wild uncontrollable feelings of joyous and girlish delight, she had accompanied the village lads and lasses in the various picturesque festivals and merry makings the country folks of that age were wont to indulge in, and which also before that day, time out o' mind, had been celebrated in rural England.

Whilst she thought over these byegone pleasures, she felt all the more wretched and impatient of her captivity. 'Twas now the "merry month of May," and poor Geraldine as she again reflected upon the Mayings she had been present at in this month; nay, at this very hour, and that never again with light heart and lighter footsteps, would she perhaps again go bounding forth with a bevy of laughing romps in such employ, the

big round tears again coursed one another down her cheek.

A firm resolve to escape, or die, fully pervaded her resolute mind. Having already used her weapon during the former attack, and having no means of reloading it, she sought some other means of defence. The room in which she was confined was utterly destitute of any thing she could turn to account; but as she glanced around her on this morning as she walked upon the leads of the tower, she espied, just without one of the embrasures, a good sized nail which with others had been driven into the interstices of the stone-work, most probably to hang bags of wool upon for defence against the rude artillery of former days, and during the wars in which old London had been so frequently mixed up.

To obtain this by stealth, to draw it forth, and conceal it, was the work of a few moments, and then she felt re-assured, as the nail

was large, and in place of a better weapon, it would, in resolute hands, be a very efficient stiletto or dagger.

Poor Geraldine, she was indeed left to her own resources, and her own quick wit, in order to try and effect her deliverance; there was, however, at this very moment a devoted friend near, who was as much resolved to find, and, if possible, rescue her, as she was to be freed from her hateful thralldom.

Shakspere who had hastened from Barnes after hearing of her abduction, had with all speed ridden to London, and after stabling his steed at the "Warwick Arms," immediately took boat, and sought the house he knew belonging to Lord Rich, situate some little distance beyond Blackfriars; and as Geraldine had been incarcerated now for nearly a week, and as it was dark on the evening of his arrival in town, although he did his utmost, both by enquiry and search to discover it, the dawn broke ere he could

make out its exact situation. For, at that period, along the banks of the Thames, there were many demi-fortresses which stood out with their platforms, wooden drawbridges, and towers. Some of these, with curiously constructed wooden frames for drawing up water from the river, others with small gardens reclaimed, and cultivated around their foundations, and which being held up with piles and buttresses, and blackened with age and the mud and slime of the river, gave such buildings the look of some old Dutch pictures.

As the day dawned, the poet, after a night of anxiety, whilst he lay to beneath one of the turrets of the castellated house in which Geraldine was confined, distinctly beheld some one leaning over from between one of the battlements above, and apparently employed in detaching something from the stone-work immediately beneath.

“A lover’s eyes,” he himself has said,

“can gaze an eagle blind.” Be that as it may, certain it is that although the boat was moored so close to the Tower, that the stunted alders which grew there hid it from the sight of any one above, he himself in a moment recognised the face of her he sought.

To make any demonstration was dangerous, as he could scarcely trust the boatmen with his secret ; and almost as soon as he had seen Geraldine, she had executed her purpose and was gone.

This confirmation of his surmise that she was a prisoner in so ominous looking a building was anything but satisfactory or reassuring ; albeit it was important for him to be so assured, in order to attempt her rescue, and his impatience to commence that effort knew no bounds. His generous heart was wrung with anguish and apprehension, as every moment might be the father of some stratagem against her safety, if indeed she

had not already fallen a sacrifice to the villainy of those by whom she had been abducted; and yet to attempt anything by day seemed hopeless. He, therefore, after a careful look at the principal window on the river side, gave orders to the boatmen to land him without delay.

Proceeding round the other side of the building he found that it was carefully secured, a small ditch or moat running entirely round it, and cutting it completely from all other buildings. A small narrow platform or drawbridge which could be easily let down from within, being the only means of access upon the land side. As the poet observed this, he resolved to make his attempt to enter by the window he had observed on the water side.

It was still early as he turned his steps once more to his old haunt, the "Warwick Arms," so that scarce any one was abroad, albeit old London at this hour was just

beginning to wake up and begin the business of the day.

As he threaded the narrow streets on his way to the hostel, he found that his footsteps were dogged, and that he was followed by a man, who kept carefully beneath the pent house stories of the houses as he passed.

The poet turned up one street and down another, yet still the figure kept at a certain distance, stopped when he stopped, proceeded as he went on.

As he had no mind to be observed, and as old London was never over safe, Shakspeare threw his cloak from off his right arm, pulled his dagger more to the front, brought the handle of his rapier handy to his grasp, and turning suddenly as he reached a more open part of the town, confronted the man.

To his surprise he found it was one of the boatmen who had rowed the boat he had

but just left, and which man he had not failed to observe, wore a boat cloak with the hood drawn carefully over his face.

"How now, sirrah?" said the poet, as he suddenly turned and confronted the man. "Wherefore do you thus dog my footsteps like a murderer?"

"Because I would fain hold converse with you in a safe place."

"What you have to say speak it here," said the poet.

"I can do so, an' you so will it, good Master Shakspeare," said the man, "but I would rather speak what I have to say in a safer hold than the open streets here, where every window may have its listener."

"Who and what are you?" said the poet. "Speak at once. I have business on hand which prevents my idling time; speak quickly, I brook no delay."

By way of reply the seaman threw back

his cloak for an instant, so that the poet at once recognised his features.

“Enough,” he said. “Follow me to the ‘Warwick Arms.’”

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Shakspeare arrived at the tavern he found the hostess already up and busy in her vocation. She was ever pleased and renovated by a sight of the poet, and accordingly she hailed his appearance with joy.

“Ah, Master Shakspeare,” she said, “o’ my word I am right glad to see thee again; nay, it seems a whole age since thou wast here last.”

The poet took her aside. “Your people are astir I see. I would fain be private this morning. Get breakfast in the Dolphin parlour; myself and this person have business,

mine hostess, of the utmost import. Anon I'll tell thee more."

"No ill news trow?" inquired mine hostess.

"Nothing good, I fear," said Shakspeare.

"Alas! I feel sorry to hear that. You look not quite yourself this morning. Come, I must get thee a cup of canary at once.

"The air is chilly. I have been on the water," returned the poet, "'tis a nipping and an eager air on the river."

* * *

As soon as Shakspeare and his follower entered the "Dolphin," the poet turned and took his hand.

"Good Master Rookwood," he said, "you have somewhat startled and surprised me. I thought you had long since departed for the New World."

"I did so; but the ship I sailed in was wrecked on the Goodwins; picked up in an open boat with several of the crew, we were brought back to London, where I have since

remained earning my daily bread here upon the river."

"But know you not your danger? Leicester and others who have parted your inheritance among them, have again stirred up the old charge against you, and mixed up your name in several plots. Your life is spanned an' you be found on English ground."

"I hardly care to preserve it," said Rookwood. "Banished, beggared, and disgraced, with a price upon my head, what have I to care for? save thyself, my friend, who is there I could trust?"

Shakspeare was moved at the melancholy of his friend.

"How strange that we should again meet thus!" he said. "How strange that you should even be in the very boat I hired. How come that about?"

"'Twas but a few hours before you embarked that I was hired by the owner of that

very boat," returned Rookwood. "I recognized, but dared not accost you ; albeit I saw that something untoward must have occurred by your anxious look and bearing."

"You saw aright," said the poet. "One you know and greatly esteem is in great danger at this moment. My mind is distraught, good friend, on her account."

"Geraldine Maynard ! Is she in peril ?" inquired Rookwood anxiously.

"Even so," returned Shakspeare ; and then he proceeded to inform the fugitive of all that had happened during his absence, the attack upon his house, and the subsequent abduction of Geraldine.

Rookwood started to his feet, his disguise, all was forgotten as mine hostess entered the room with the means and appliances for a substantial breakfast. She stared at the fine form and handsome face of Rookwood as he now stood in evident perturbation, regardless

of all but the danger of her whom he secretly loved better than life itself.

"My Lord Rich," he said, "that disgrace to his order. Hath he done this outrage, think ye?"

"I do think so. I do suspect him very grievously. But, prithee, calm yourself. Mine hostess is, luckily, my friend, and to be trusted; we must take her into our councils. Nothing like a woman's advice when women are concerned." And then Shakspeare proceeded to inform Mistress Ursula of the abduction of Geraldine as he had before told Rookwood of that circumstance.

Mine hostess of the tavern was as much surprised as Rookwood.

"Oh! the homicide, the villain, the caitiff!" she cried in great wrath. "His name was sufficiently odious before, an' he ever come my way now I'll have him pelted through Chepe. But, stay, methinks I can

give you some crumb of comfort, gentlemen," she added. "My Lord Rich, as I have gathered through one of his men who comes here sometimes on his way to his lordship's house beside the river, now lies wounded at Whitehall. 'Tis given out that he was engaged in a duel with some other lord of the Court, and that he received a dangerous hurt."

"Pray Heaven it be true," said Shakspeare. "What manner of man was he who spoke of this matter?"

"Marry! a tall, roistering companion; one who has been much here of late, coming and going. Nay, now I remember me, most probably on his way to and from the mansion before named."

"I think I know that man," said Shakspeare; "he is most assuredly a follower of Lord Rich. I have oftentimes seen him at the Court; nay, more, Master Maynard partly identified him as the very person who assisted

to carry off his niece. It is of import that we make careful search for that villain, and if possible get him into our clutches, Master Rookwood. But we must now go warily to work, for such villains and their employers are dangerous fellows to meddle with."

A consultation was now accordingly held, in which their further plans were discussed; at all events it was agreed that careful watch should be kept on Geraldine's prison-house. Rookwood undertaking to keep guard from the river, whilst Shakspeare watched the main entrance.

The poet had much upon his hands at this time. The Globe Theatre on the Bank-side was now open, and Burbage and his followers relied almost wholly upon Shakspeare's unequalled powers in that venture.

But all and everything was at this moment merged in his anxiety in the cause of poor Geraldine, and his determination to rescue her or perish in the attempt.

Acting upon the scheme they had concocted, Rookwood proceeded to the river side, and finding amongst the *debris* of the broken shipping a good sized mast, by nailing small pieces of wood across it, fashioned it into a sort of ladder, this he brought up the river, and lay *perdu* near the suspected house till night-fall, when he was joined by the poet,—“that tiger’s heart in a player’s hide.” After raising the ladder and placing it against one of the windows, they quickly mounted, and tearing away one or two of the rusty bars, entered the room and found it untenanted.

Amazed and chagrined at not finding Geraldine there, they searched it thoroughly, ascended the stairs which led to the turret, and then deliberated upon what next was to be done. That she had been there very recently was evident, for several articles of female apparel, which had been supplied to her during

her captivity, were lying about, also the bed had been slept on; and above all the small dag or pistol, which had been of such service to her in her recent extremity, was still lying where she had thrown it, upon the table.

Hitherto they had conducted their search so silently that the inmates of the house, if there were any, had not been disturbed, and as the room door was now unlocked they resolved at all hazards to search the whole house.

Proceeding, therefore, down a rude stone staircase, they commenced their task; and entering one of the smaller chambers on the ground floor, a sort of detached room, whose windows looked over the river, they found the female who had charge of the house, and who was indeed the very person who had been the attendant of Geraldine.

The hag, for she was an ill-favoured

specimen of the sex, uttered a scream of mingled terror and surprise as she saw them enter the room. She let fall the saucepan in which she was preparing her dinner, and stood glaring upon them like some startled fury.

Shakspeare advanced, and immediately questioned her regarding her recent charge.

"Geraldine Maynard!" iterated the woman. "As if I was to know the names of every woman brought hither."

"We seek the young person who was here but a few hours back," returned Shakspeare. "Give us intelligence of her and where we can find her, and here is gold to pay for your information."

"Put up your money," said the woman, somewhat mollified; "I have no intelligence to give. The young woman you seek is not in this house. Let that suffice."

"Where is she?" inquired Rookwood eagerly

"Ask those who can tell," replied the woman with a grin. "How should I know where the woman is, trow?"

The poet and his friend were now fairly at fault. All they could elicit, after much entreaty and many threats, was that the female who had been under charge of this hag had been taken thence somewhere about noon on that day. But who were the persons so removing her, and where she had been taken to, that she as resolutely refused to tell. The persons of those who had removed her, she owned she knew; but where she was gone, which was the all important object of the inquiry, again she disclaimed all knowledge of.

Bribery was evidently of no avail, threats of as little. To take the old jade before the Dogberries of the city Shakspeare knew was only to delay matters; and so after another and a more careful search through

the house, they left the old wretch, and bent their steps once more to the tavern in East Chepe.

CHAPTER XIV.

AGAIN we must invite our readers to visit the neighbourhood in which our story first opens. The little spot of waste land neighbouring the lovely district of Sheen and Mortlake—Barnes Common; and again they will find it the scene of festivity and rejoicing. It is now "the middle summer's spring." Hill and dale, forest and mead, paved fountain and rushy brook, every sylvan region near is now clothed in verdure and beauty.

The village maidens early astir, even before the dawn had been on the alert, and

as the first faint streaks of the severing clouds appeared, they were out gathering flowers, making wreaths, and coronets, and chains to deck themselves and their houses. Sweet creatures they were; full of hilarity and joy. For an event was about to take place which such maidens ever hail with delight. No less an event than a wedding.

A wedding, too, it was which peculiarly pleased them; for it was the wedding of one they admired and loved, and respected. The wedding of the daughter of the great man of the neighbourhood. Francis Walsingham was about to be united on this morning to the greatest ornament of the Court of Elizabeth, Sir Philip Sidney.

In his present mood Sir Philip had desired that the nuptials should be as quiet as possible, wholly without that pomp and revelry it would otherwise have been attended by.

Still, although the marriage was thus

virtually a private affair, with but few invited, and those few only the nearest and dearest, it was quite impossible to restrain the villagers around from making a demonstration in their own primitive way; and thus a long procession of comely lasses strewed flowers in their path, hung garlands along the whole road even from the manorial mansion to Barnes church.

So also the bull baitings, and the bear baitings, the preparations for a huge bonfire, together with all other diversions and divestments of the period, the youths of the immediate neighbourhood could not be restrained from enjoying.

Then there was shooting at the butts, where the skilled bowmen of the Common "clapp'd i' the clout at twelve score;" and then there was also such carrying of four handshafts, that it would have done a man's heart good to see the sport. The young

archers that met under the crab tree at one end of the Common,

“Cladde in cote and hood of greene.”

“Ha! ha! see he hath won the turn, hit the pin!” This is the old English practice which won the day at Agincourt; and well did one of the spectators know as much, for in his youth he had been his “craft’s master” in his own sweet county, and so he tells them in his own sweet style

“In my school days when I had sent one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the right same flight.”

* * *

In Elizabeth’s day the distinctions of rank were sufficiently defined, so that men mixed freely together so long as both conducted themselves without offence.

The barriers we now use in society belong to an age of pretensions and assumption by those holding no real rank.

See out there in the midst of the Common

stands the quintain. Several horsemen are around it, waiting the arrival of some of the nobles who have been present at the nuptial ceremony, and the entertainment at the great House.

“That which here stands up
Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block.”

Still the numerous guests of the House enjoy the sport of the quintain as much as the villagers themselves. The horsemen, high and low, form a line on either side, whilst each rider, spear in hand, attacks the figure. Then comes the hard blow from the wooden man as he swings round on his pivot, and down goes the challenger. Another and another fall, till, at last, the quintain is stricken in the centre by some more skilful hand, and receives the prize amidst the laughter of all around.

There was, however, one family resident upon that Common, whose house was a house of grief and mourning. It was not the grief and mourning for kindred, or near

relatives dead, and entombed, and regretted as for ever gone to their last homes. No, it was grief and mourning, and dismay, and apprehension, and uncertainty all mixed up and mingled together for one stolen from their care and custody;—taken from them, forcibly abducted by some villain, or villains, and whose ultimate fate, and whether dead or living, ill or well, none there could by any means discover trace, or penetrate the mystery; and old Hugh Maynard, his wife and sons, and relatives, and servitors formed this mourning and sorrowing family.

Certes they felt every sort of respect and good feeling towards the family of the Manor House, despite the *contretemps* which had transpired in the matter of Master Rookwood; but still what with their anxiety, and the distracted state of mind this untoward event had produced, neither the old man nor any of his family could enter with spirit into the merry-makings and the sports around.

Master Shakspere, after losing all trace of Geraldine in London, had placed Rookwood on the look out in that neighbourhood, and re-visited Barnes. He was present there on occasion of Sir Philip's marriage, and after giving what comfort and advice he could to the Miller's household when the marriage ceremony was over, had strolled out upon the Common among the revellers. His purpose, during the time which had elapsed after the onslaught upon the old mansion by the Thames, was to keep a sharp look out upon Lord Rich's movements, and above all to find, and also keep an eye upon Pierce Corbelt.

To his great annoyance, however, although mine hostess of the tavern had promised to give him intimation the moment any of my Lord Rich's people came to her house, not one of them had been there since.

On the ceremony of the marriage, and after a visit to Master Maynard, he had strolled

out on the Common amongst the revellers, not only to look about him, but he thought that perhaps he might fall in with some one from whom information might be gleaned, and in order to beguile the old man's grief, he had permitted the Miller to accompany him.

As they mingled amongst the throng, the wizard of the neighbouring town passed along in state; for Dr. Dee, since his interview with the Queen, had risen to great estimation, having been sought tenfold by the courtiers and the gallants of the Court; nay, it is to be feared he had in something fallen from his strict integrity, and lofty style, since royal favour and Court influence had been thus showered upon him. He had now for some time flattered the Queen with promise of perennial youth and beauty from his anticipated discovery of the Elixir of Life, as also the prospect of unbounded wealth, whenever he should arrive at the secret of converting the baser metals into gold.

Be that as it may, the Doctor came upon Barnes Common on this day in all his state and grandeur—being on his way from a visit to the Queen at Whitehall to his house at Mortlake. He travelled, as was his wont, with two coaches, each drawn by four horses, in a state little inferior to an ambassador. Nay, such was the esteem in which the Queen held him at this period, that he had two livings in the church, and was also Chancellor of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Doctor's real talents and genius were great, and however much he might abuse them by trickery and deceit, they taught him to respect and honour the man, whose writings at that moment were making so much stir, and causing so much amusement to the town. Accordingly he halted the great lumbering, gilded vehicle, which was called a coach at that period, put his sapient head from the window, and hailed the poet.

"Good Master Shakspeare," he said, "I

am right glad to see you here this afternoon."

Shakspeare could glean amusement and instruction from any man, "as a weasel sucks eggs." The more eccentric, the more humorous, the greater the humbug and cheat, the greater the offering to him. He knew Dr. Dee as well as he knew himself, and treated him accordingly. The Doctor also knew Master Maynard, having had dealings with him in his business, and he respected the Miller and his honest bearing, and unflinching integrity of purpose.

"And right glad am I to see thee too, Master Maynard," he continued, "and how doth my good friend and gossip, your good wife, and the charming Geraldine, and all at home."

The Miller turned away his head, and feigned to be looking at some lads who were shooting at the poppinjay. He felt he could not answer. Master Shakspeare walked apart

with the Doctor, and told him of the Miller's trouble.

"Fore me," said Dee, whose good feeling led him to commiserate his neighbour. "but this troubles me. That such an outrage should have been done, and no redress, no discovery of its perpetrators. No trace of the female thus outraged is bad, is vile, is an open and apparent shame. Let us consult upon this matter. If it shall so please you to gratify my table, I shall beseech your society to supper. Master Maynard, I do invite you to come too. What say you? In the multitude of counsel there is wisdom. Come, you see although it is affirmed by the vulgate that 'I am the personal friend and accredited agent of Lucifer'—you see I can quote Scripture all the same. But come, prithee enter my coach, and I will immediately convey ye to my house."

If the Doctor gulled others, like many other cheats, he gulled himself in like

manner, inasmuch as he had actually brought himself to believe in his own infallibility, and that really and truly he had the art of divination.

"I will consult my magic volume, Master Maynard," he said, "and take a glance into my mirror, and who knows but I may be able to gain some clue to this infernal business."

"Pray heaven you may be able to do so," said the Miller, "for I am well nigh distraught."

Master Shakspeare smiled; he had but little faith in the Doctor's power; but, as the Miller seemed to wish it, he consented to accept the invitation, and entering the coach they were driven off to Mortlake, to the Doctor's house there.

Granting that the great magician was in reality unable to transmute the baser metals into gold, certain it is, that he was enabled to extract the metal in very

large quantities from the duller metal of those dupes and idiots who flocked from all quarters to consult himself, his mirror, and his magic volume, so that the great man lived in a style of magnificence at Mortlake which sufficiently astonished all and sundry. He affected the company of the great too, whose cupidity his promises encouraged whilst he entertained them at his table.

Master Maynard felt quite bewildered as he sat at table in the magician's private apartment, at the splendour and magnificence of all around. For it was the Doctor's custom to eat off gold and silver, and to be attended by several servitors in rich livery; but that which most astonished the honest Miller, was the sight of a thick-lipped Ethiopian, black as ebony, equipped in quaint costume, with collar and bracelets of gold upon neck and wrist, and who seemed a sort of familiar spirit, with

whom the Doctor conversed by signs and tokens, but who emitted no sound with his mouth and thick lips. Altogether, what with the strange invisible perfume which pervaded the chamber, and the brilliant light with which it was illumined, poor Maynard thought that he had really and truly got into a land of enchantment.

The Doctor discoursed scholarly and wisely as was his wont. There was a sort of Holofernes' style of thrasonical brag which highly amused Shakspeare; especially when he undertook to prove some of the poet's contemporaries, and who he himself considered little better than ninnies, most weak and poor in style.

"Nay, I will prove their verses to be very unlearned, neither savouring of poetry, wit, nor invention. 'For instance, for a stave, a stanza, a verse, you find not therein the apostrophes, and therefore miss the accent. Now, for the elegancy, facility,

and golden cadence of poesy Ovidius Naso was the man; and why, indeed, Naso, but for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jirks of invention?' And now, good Mahomed, I see thou art pregnant with news—a letter, eh? Look, good Mahomed, and see if directed to myself or either of these my friends. Yet, stay, I will myself overglance the superscript."

The Doctor's very learned disquisition upon poesy and its accessories, was, as our reader may have surmised, interrupted by the arrival of a letter, sealed and secured with all the observance of all sealed packets at that ceremonious period.

Craving pardon of his guests, the Doctor at once proceeded to break the seal, cut the threads of the packet, and peruse its contents.

"*Pauca verba gentles,*" he said, "this is of import in the cause you wot of. Doth my lord's messenger tarry, good Mahomed?

Ah! I see by thy gesture he doth so. Retire awhile, and I will concoct and indite an answer forthwith. Most worthy guests," he said, "now that my sable-coloured attendant and the other menials are withdrawn, I will expound unto you that this letter may help us in regard to the lost one. 'Tis from my Lord Rich, will you hear it with attention, Master Shakspeare?"

"As I would hear an oracle."

"Good. Now, harkee to his lordship's style:

"'Great Deputy: The Devil's vice-gerent and dominator of fate—'

"Most complimentary, in the esteem of this lord—most insolent, in mine own. But I will sort him yet. Now, hear again in manner and form following,

"'Know, O Doctor, that I am at outs, and want a touch of thy skill. A certain maid, a wench who hath given me much trouble and some pain to entrap and ensnare,

hath dealt me also considerable ill, but who I am determined to subdue, hath by some means escaped from the net I wove around her. She hath suborned the suborner and both have gone off, so that I can by no means find either. Now, O Doctor, I would fain seek an interview with thee, in order to test thy great skill, so as to tell me the whereabouts of these runagates, in order that I may, not only have revenge, but reward. My servitor awaits thy reply.' ”

The Doctor took off his green spectacles.

“This is not so well as I looked for, but the best I ever heard,” he said.

“Aye, the best for the worst,” said Maynard. “What sayst thou to it, Master Shakspeare? ’Tis to me a riddle which I cannot understand or solve.”

“It is a piece of intelligence,” said the poet, “that by no means mends the matter, according to my judgment, the letter speaks

for itself. The villain hath employed a greater villain than himself, and the latter hath carried off the prize."

"Look ye, my master," said Dee, "I hold it in all my secret dealings with the compounded clay man, to keep faith, my reputation, my interest, mine honour so teaches me. In all ordinary cases, look you, I praise such a course. Here, however, we have something of another sort, here villainy must be unmasked, crime prevented. Ergo, I have made you partner in this business because it concerns yourselves. A child, a victim, so to be abducted, and so abused, is vile. Now, harkee, co-mates, we must see this degraded lord at once, and glean from him all we can, and upon that information proceed onwards in our quest."

So saying, the Doctor clapped his hands, as a signal for his familiar, and Mahomed

immediately made his appearance; a sign signified, pen, ink and paper, which the mute as quickly supplied, and the Doctor wrote his reply in these words,

“My Lord Rich,

“I have but short time to bestow upon the affairs of those who crawl on the surface, and am as little inclined to mix and mingle in the dust of their daily doings. A brief space I will afford you at noon to-morrow. Be punctual, an’ you wish for my assistance.
“DEE.”

“Now, my worthy friends,” he said, “I must to my laboratory. Be with me again at this hour to-morrow; and so, farewell.”

Master Maynard scratched his head as he stood ready to depart.

“I thought he said something could be done, Doctor, through your magic mirror

that we hear so much about, and that wondrous volume you spoke of."

"Content thee, good rustic friend," said the Doctor. "Something shall be done through virtue of that same. But first let us look into the mirror of this villain's black breast, this Rich. Master Shakspeare," he said, taking the poet apart, "it would ill beseem me to attempt imposition with thee, thou art profound in all things and one worthy of trust and confidence. I need not tell thee who hath created the magician Prospero, in how much or how little my art suffices. I am too much interested in the fate of yonder poor man's sweet child, not to do all in my power to aid him, and to bring her back if she be still alive. But the case is one we must needs call a bad one. This noble, this Rich, having wealth, station, power, and influence at Court, useth all for evil in the place of good, be it my endeavour to aid in

his discomfiture. Adieu till to-morrow;
comfort that good old man as you best can,
and so hope for the best."

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER leaving Doctor Dee, Shakspeare took leave of Master Maynard for that time, promising to be with him early the next day, and as he had urgent business with Lord Southampton, who was then in attendance upon the Queen, he mounted his horse and rode to Richmond.

It was a thronged Court when the poet arrived at the palace. The Queen had feasted the Duke of Alençon and other grandees from foreign lands, and an assembly or ball was in progress.

But splendid as was the scene, as Shaks-

pere mingled amidst the throng, for through his intimacy with Southampton, Essex, and other nobles, he found admittance where greater, or rather men of higher rank, might have been denied.

Grand as was the scene at this gorgeous period of England's history, and surrounded as her Majesty was by noble forms, she was again out of sorts, out of temper, and ill at ease. By some untoward accident, a furious libel had either been thrust by some malcontent into her hand, or placed in her way. It was couched in the vilest language, reviling her as "an usurper, the firebrand of mischief, the scourge of God, and a rebuke to all womankind." In addition to this, and other annoyances, her Majesty had once or twice fallen into perfect paroxysms of rage when the tidings reached her of the marriage of her beloved Sidney. The Earl of Essex was, indeed, on this night the only noble who could at all pacify her Majesty, or hold

anything like agreeable converse. Sir Philip Sidney had been the model on which the youthful Earl, at this period, had endeavoured to form his own character, and much that was noble, generous, and fair of promise, in the rash and fiery earl, may perhaps be attributed to his imitation of that stainless knight. As he found that he alone had the power of consoling the Lion-hearted Tudor, he endeavoured to make himself as agreeable as possible, and accordingly her Majesty now elected him as her knight, and lavished favours and distinction upon him with profuse liberality.

And thus Shakspeare looked at this mighty Queen, as he stood and contemplated the whole scene around, himself unmarked amid the busy throng. He watched her look and bearing, and perused her as she played her part there. Abandoning herself to her own sad thoughts and bitter feelings, poor and unhappy as she was, even with the splendour

of the world around her, she felt alone, dejected and miserable amidst the glittering throng. What in reality was it to her but tinsel and gilding? Even Essex, "the young, the beautiful, the brave"—even he could not at times win a word from her in her sorrowful mood.

"Who shall be trusted now
When one's right hand is perjured to the bosom."

"And you too, you foolish ungrateful boy, you must needs be at this pestilent wedding," she said to the young Earl.

Essex muttered something about his valued friend, and his inability to refuse the invitation.

"I marvel what such a man as Sir Philip Sidney could possibly find in that white-faced thing to induce him to marry her. To me, she is perfectly obnoxious to sight, with no redeeming point about her."

"Pardon me, your Majesty, I cannot

quite agree. In some things she doth excel. Her hair, for instance, albeit it is not quite like threads of gold, is almost a match with the lovely locks I now gaze upon."

The wicked Earl had observed that the Queen, on this night, wore one of her reddest wigs. She smiled and felt pleased.

"Well," she said, "we will grant her her hair. Now what more have you to urge in her favour?"

"Then she hath not the real oval so exquisitely beautiful as in your highness's face; neither hath she that wondrous feature, of all other features, that doth fix the beholder; nor hath she the bow of Cupid on the lips; nor the regal eye (here Essex paused, and shaded his own eyes); still it may be, that my friend, who could only, like myself, gaze at distance upon the perfection of charms that grace one he dare not even hope to approach; still, I say, he might

possibly find it some solace to take what he could get—a substitute, in one considered—” The Earl stopped.

“ Considered what—thou impertinent knave?” said the Queen tapping the Earl’s cheek with her fan, as he looked down in pretended confusion, and again shading his eyes.

“ Pardon me,” he said, “ I dare not say more, especially as your Majesty but now spoke in disparagement of the charms of one considered the greatest beauty of your court, and only inferior, at the same time, not unlike—”

“ Well, we have heard it said, that in some things, this Frances Walshingham doth resemble ourself.”

Essex bowed, and her Majesty again relapsed into one of her dejected moods, and leaning listlessly in her seat, watched the wonderful pirouettes of Sir Christopher Hatton, who was amongst the dancers, for some

minutes without speaking. Perhaps she was wishing herself the fortunate bride of him she loved ; perhaps she was envying the humblest lass that danced on the greensward at the wedding. At any rate, she felt the 'glistening' grief of her station, and as she felt it, the great poet observed and noticed her dejected countenance.

" I swear 'tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content
Than to be perked up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow."

* * * *

Ah ! and what did not the poet of all time note, and remark, and con over in that magnificent presence, amidst that gorgeous throng of men and women. Men so famous, so renowned. That breed of men, whose descendants have since shewn " the mettle of their pasture," and like a jolly troop of huntsmen, trodden the " vasty fields of France,"

and other grounds as conquerors. 'Twas there he saw those nobles and courtiers, and others, so bold, so reckless, so untameable in their pride and power, and yet kept in awe by that fierce-spirited woman. Fierce in spirit, at times, as the fell and dangerous tyrant, her father; but whose fierceness was even then scarcely fit to restrain them.

* * * * *

Our poet wrote his King John somewhere about this period, and perhaps many of those descriptions, and glorious scenes may have been conceived from what he beheld around him then. Nay, the prototypes of various characters in his other dramas he had here before his piercing ken. The crooked-backed Cecil, "sent into the world scarce half made up," so lamely and unfashionably, that perhaps the huge wolf hounds of the ante-chamber may have growled, and uttered

their short ominous bark as he walked by them. With his wily tongue, and that insinuating manner, which made him enter the lists with his royal mistress, and win his way to favour, despite the towering forms and magnificence of his enemies.

Like the crook-back with Lady Anne, he could fawn, cringe, and flatter till he prevailed.

"My Lord Rich," said the Queen, suddenly raising her head and regarding that nobleman sternly, "you have been a stranger at Court lately. Enough, I remember now to have heard," she continued interrupting the peer as he was about to make answer, "you have been rash enough to engage in some private quarrel about Lady Devereux. My lord, my lord, you have somehow departed from your usual vigilance methinks, and allowed your former rival to get the start of you. Methought the marriage we talked

of, was to come off speedily, long ere this."

"Circumstances, may it please your Highness, have deferred it; and since then my indisposition hath caused a still further delay."

"So much the better for you, my Lord. You will pause upon it now, ere it be too late, an' you be wise. Eh! what said our poet the other night, in his Danish drama?

" ' We will have no more marriages.
Those that are married already may live,
The rest shall keep as they are.' "

"Your Highness," said Essex, "will scarce approve the Dane's advice, so far as to consign all these beauties here to a nunnery. Nay, methinks I see one, at least, to whom I would fain say,

" ' Lady, you are the cruellest she alive,
If you would lead these Graces to the grave,
And leave the world no copy.' "

The Queen again tapped the Earl fondly

with her fan, and smiled graciously upon him. Even the most minute, as well as the largest dose of flattery, was consoling to her.

“Come, my lord,” she said rising, and giving Essex her hand, “the measure hath commenced again. Come let us ‘foot it,’” and forthwith her Majesty joined the dancers, where as was her wont, when once she did begin, she quickly outjumped the best dancer there.*

“Honi soit qui mal y pense,” said Clot, coming close to his cousin of England. “I shall hardly need to shew the royal garter to this fair company, an’ I should pick it up to-night, seeing that your Highness is displaying it most liberally. You really outshine yourself this evening.”

“Go to ass,” returned the Queen, “an’

* “I was at Court yesterday where there is nothing like the dancing.”—*Annals of the Court of Elizabeth*.

I do so, it is to show these foreign suitors there, that my limbs are not so stiffened by age, as they have made out."

"The fixed stars which were formerly in Aries are now in Taurus," returned Clot. "Nay, the Greek astronomers show no compunctions in respect of Cherin of Cleameades, a philosopher, whose eloquence Cicero dreaded. Prithee, coz, expound unto me this riddle."

"Peace, Clot, peace," said the Queen. "You remind me of those prating coxcombs, who would rather be talking than listening, even if Solomon was the orator."

"My Lord of Essex," said Clot without taking notice of the remark of his mistress, "perhaps you can answer me the question. Why is it, I say, that Sir Robert Cecil there, who is one of the plainest men in this presence, succeeds so well with the ladies, when Sir Cristopher Hatton, who is one of the handsomest, as often fails?"

"Nay, I cannot tell thee exactly," said Essex.

"Shall I explain? Well then, it is because Sir Cristopher bestows those attentions upon his legs and his other fine proportions, which the little man there, who hath them not—and knows he hath them not—bestows upon the woman he wishes to win. Ha! ha! am I not right? If you wish to inspire a woman with love for you, fill her with love of herself. Eh?" and then he added, in an aside to the Earl, "all that runs over will be yours."

"Go to, knave," said the Queen, "we must have you to the dark room, and the whip; an' you grow scurrilous."

Clot cut a caper, and turned a pirouette, and was off to another part of the room in a jiffey, and perhaps it would have amused the reader to have seen the gravity his face assumed, and to have heard the staid and

sober wisdom he broached, as he held converse with his friend the poet.

"It takes a wise man to play the fool," is an old saying, perhaps dating for centuries before Elizabeth's reign; certain it is, that her Majesty's "motley minded gentleman" was a most material fool, one who used his wisdom like a stalking-horse, under presentation of which he shot his wit.

"A rare fellow, my lord, good at anything,
And yet a fool."

Nay, it would, we say, have been curious, could the reader have overheard the converse of Clot, and how he bewailed, in statesman-like terms, and with wise looks, the times abuse, the agitated state of the nation, the sacrifice of human life then going on, on the scaffold, streaming as it did with blood; and then the pestilential gaols, crowded with victims, the greater portion of whom died of fevers and famine, unpitied and unknown,

save in the annals of private families ; and this, too, from the constant conspiracies formed in behalf of the captive heiress of the crown.

The Queen loved to dance, as we have already seen, she liked, too, to see others dance ; but the couples were obliged to keep strict guard over their deportment and demeanour, if they wished to escape a sharp rebuke. Anything approaching to a particular flirtation, or a love-making scene, in her immediate vicinity was sure to awaken her jealous wrath. The ladies were, consequently, obliged to be as stiff in manner as their starched ruffs ; and the cavaliers, as ceremonious as Malvolio in his cross garters, and only when beyond her piercing ken, did the couples venture to indulge in dalliance, and free and easy converse. She stopped in the midst of the brawl to rate Sir Walter Raleigh on this night, for close and particular attentions to Lady Throckmorton, and

my Lord Rich again came under censure for his courtship to Penelope Devereux, which courtship she had so lately herself promoted.

CHAPTER XVI.

BALLS or assemblies, even if royal ones, were not kept up so late as in our own times. They began much earlier, and the dancers and guests were, indeed, sometimes in bed and asleep about the time the state affairs, of more recent date, are just in the midst of their revelry. Her Majesty in her moody and fitful state on this night, could not even find her usual pleasure in the *la-volta*, the *couranto*, the *cinque apace*, the brawl, or any other dance. She walked to one of the windows, drew aside the curtain, and looked forth upon the scene without.

"This night is but the daylight sick," she might have said,

"It looks a little paler."

There lay the silver Thames, and the state boats and barges of the several guests and nobles, with their high sterns and prows, flags and banners. The men-at-arms and servitors in waiting, standing idly by or slumbering around. There were the sweet woodlands beyond, in which the stag lay couched in the fern. All without, so grand, so lovely, so tranquil, in her own park-like England. And again she felt that to rove untrammelled in those sweet woodlands, with no cares of state, no coronetted troubles, nothing but a cross-bow in her hand, or a milk-pail on her head would be Elysium, in comparison to the anxieties and troubles coupled to the magnificence in which she was presently environed. She turned from the window—from the pale sweet aspect of nature without, to the golden

glare of the lighted room, and all the bustle and hum, the evil passions, jealousies, heart-burnings, &c., of the glittering crowd who occupied it. As she advanced to resume her seat, the company immediately around the window fell back and made a line.

Suddenly she stopped, and looked hard at a man who stood somewhat back, amidst the followers of one of the foreign nobles on that night especially fêted. The lioness advanced a pace towards him, her keen glance still fixed.

The cavalier was a tall dark-browed, sal-low-looking man, and had a foreign look. His cheeks blanched. He would have turned aside, but the Queen's gaze fascinated him. He had not power to grasp the stiletto at his girdle. She put forth her hand, pointed to him, almost touched him.

"Seize that caitiff wretch," she said, "at once."

Sir Christopher Hatton, who was the cap-

tain of the Gentlemen-Pensioners at this time, and who happened to be close beside her, immediately sprung upon the man and seized him by the arms, whilst a couple of the Pensioners, who were on duty in the room, as quickly took possession of him.

“ I am well served here, my lords,” she said, turning to those immediately around her, and who were sufficiently astonished at the proceeding. “ I am well served, I say, and well-cared for, when none of you could discover an assassin in the presence, but myself. Nay, even Sir Christopher Hatton, who this very morning handed me the written description of his outward favour, failed to recognize the original of his own sketch. But by Heaven’s grace, an’ these plots and these murderous miscreants be not better cared for, we will take means for our own especial preservation, even to the detriment of those whose duty it is to guard it.”

“ Your Majesty will grant me your par-

don," said Hatton, after he had conveyed the offending subject from the room, and placed him, strongly guarded, in an apartment below to await further orders. "It required wisdom and penetration, more than a weak mortal like myself is in possession of, and only to be found in one human being perhaps, in the realm, to discover, or surmise that an assassin, such as yonder man, would dare to lurk in the very chambers of this palace."

"I am right then, this is the agent spoken of."

"It is, your Majesty, he hath at once confessed, he obtained admittance here disguised as an attendant on the Duke d'Alençon, and intended to stab your Majesty when some of the guests were departing."

"But I detected the scar in the forehead, and the peculiar look about the eye," said the Queen. "Enough, let the miscreant be taken at once to the Tower, and racked

till he disclose his accomplices. Come, this hath in something disturbed our dance, and paled the ladies faces. Let them strike up. One more dance, and then to supper and to bed."

This intimation or command was all very well, and accordingly again brayed out the minstrelsy, and again the dance commenced. But the mirth and enjoyment of the assembly was marred; the minds of most there were agitated and troubled as was the Queen's.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHAKSPERE lay that night in a small closet-like apartment, upon a truckle bed, in one of the thick-walled, flanking towers of the palace ;—one of the rooms appropriated as the lodgings of my Lord Southampton and his followers. Peradventure, a groom or coachman in these later times might have turned up his nose at its confined and cabined proportions, and glanced with contempt at its one arrowslit window, its stone walls, its one heavy chair, and small table ; yet peradventure the great heir of fame in his sweet and amiable mood, pen in hand, might there on that night ere he slept

have thrown off some wondrous passage in some play he had on hand, which in after times has served to elevate the hearts and minds of millions. Ah, alas, would that we could identify and look upon some such thick-ribbed Norman cell or chamber, where his eye glanced and his pen worked.

* * * *

The next day, after an interview with his patron, he paid his promised visit to Master Maynard, as agreed upon, and subsequently to Dr. Dee's, in order to hear the result of the Doctor's interview with my Lord Rich.

The Doctor received them in the same state as before, and whilst they partook of his hospitality, he gave them in his own pompous style, a true and particular account of all that had transpired.

"I have gathered something, my good and special friends," he said, "though by no means all I wish to learn."

"Good, an' Heaven will, I trust," said the Miller.

"You shall judge. In the first place then, his lordship came to inform me of his deeds and doings, ere he asked my aid. But I cut him short at once, and assumed a foreknowledge of his object and practices ere he could state them. 'You came to me in order to make inquiry after a young person you have stolen from her friends, one Alice Maynard, niece of Hugh Maynard, the miller of Barnes Common.'

"How know you this?" he asked.

"Heed ye not that. You took her away by your agent forcibly, on her return from Blackfriars towards her own home. You imprisoned her in your house on the banks of the Thames; you attempted her honour, and received your guerdon or remuneration. You were wounded, and made false report of your misfortune to the furtherance of your suit to Lady Devereux.'

“‘You deal with the devil!’

“‘No, not I; I leave that to others; I only use the good gifts God hath given me. In few, my lord, your prey hath escaped you; and now being in doubt and in the dark as to where she hath gone, and whether the agent you employed hath met with mishap or purposely cheated you and ta’en the prey himself, you come to me?’

“‘I do,’ said Rich, ‘and whether you deal with the evil or the good angel, I am so interested in this matter and this girl, that I will give a good reward to you an’ you can aid me.’”

Rich was aghast at the extent of the Doctor’s seeming knowledge. The Doctor spared him not, and as he turned ever and anon to his magic volume, which he affected to consult for some fresh defalcation or dirty deed, (for he made it his business to gain information upon the doings of most

of the hangers-on of the Court), his lordship's thoughts seemed known, "set in a note book, learned and conned by rote to cast into his teeth."

In fact, the degenerate noble received a severe lecture, but got no satisfaction. The Magician gleaned all he could, and gave no information in return.

"Your lordship's is one of those cases in which I do not care to use my art, or at any rate to give aidance to such practises. In the first place, a young maiden is destroyed, or an attempt made to do so; a family disgraced. Secondly, a noble female to be wedded, finds her course of love interrupted; and lastly, a noble gentleman put to disappointment, and his prospects marred. These, my lord, are grave matters to be mixed up in."

"Your last observation points, I suppose, to Sir Philip Sidney," said Lord Rich, "who yesterday married in despite—I hate the puppy."

"I have heard as much," returned Dea, "and that he had no favourable opinion of yourself. He knows his wronger, beware his just anger."

"It is always safe at least to learn from our enemies," said Rich with a sneer. "I begin to see I am not to expect favour from, or to count upon Doctor Dee amongst my friends."

"I repeat that I can in nothing aid your present designs, my lord," said Dee, drawing himself up to his full height.

"Enough," said Rich, as he donned his castor with a flourish; "I will then trust to my own wit and vigilance to get this woman into my power."

"Our interview is ended," said Dee, who began to feel half inclined to order up his people, and have the unscrupulous noble thrown into the Thames.

"Villany that is vigilant will sometimes

be an overmatch for virtue if she slumbers at her post," he returned.

"You will keep my council at least, Doctor?" said Lord Rich.

"You bound me to no secrecy when you first stated your case," returned Dee. "I promised nothing, and if I did so, believe me not."

"Why?"

"Because none are so fond of secrets as those who mean not to keep them. Such only covet a secret, my lord, as a spendthrift money—for circulation."

His lordship looked puzzled, he turned and left the apartment and the house.

"Good," said Dee, as he made him a mock salute, and bowed him out. "Thus do I make even so mean a wretch as that my servitor. The villain will now talk of me as one possessing the divining rod of Appollion, and yet 'tis disgraceful to have aught to do with such a knave."



Meantime after the visit, as the trio considered over the matter, they found but little to congratulate themselves upon, and they separated upon their several quest without coming to any conclusion as to the next best move to make. The Alchemist betook himself to his laboratory, the Miller to his flour bags, and the Poet returned to town. The latter much wished to see Rookwood, and to find out if any thing had transpired during his absence.

But unfortunately, Rookwood, albeit when they parted he had promised to give him the meeting, was nowhere to be found. He sought him at the Cross at Chepe, at St. Magnus Corner, and in many other places, but all was without success.

The Globe Theatre on the river's bank we have before seen was now open, and the poet had a lodging in its near vicinity. That is to say, he had a couple of rooms in

one of the rural hostels on the bank side. Picturesque old inns they were, too, with their gardens in rear, and their capacious yards with galleries all round; and their ample kitchens, and the fine old trees which so pleasantly shadowed them in front; and then the roaring blades, the wayfarers and travellers of all sorts, not to mention some of the hangers on of the neighbouring theatre, who took their draughts and uttered their witticisms, and as we should now call it, "chaffed" each other so amusingly. See how the carriers, "having great charge," come flocking up from the old Kent Road, during these stirring times. See the ostlers, the tapsters, and the buxom serving wenches; the rollicking cavaliers, and even the doubtful, dangerous looking knaves that help to make up the crowd in that Chaucer-looking yard.

Nym, and Pistol, and Gadshill, and Poins, and Peto, and even something like

fat Jack Falstaff, sweet Jack Falstaff; some "ton of man" and mine of fun and drollery may have been amongst the tavern haunters at this sweet spot.

It is early dawn on the morning which follows the one on which Shakspeare returned to town. He had slept in his lodgings at the "Blue Boar," which inn was not very far from the Globe Theatre. He is already astir, doning doublet and hose, and looking from his window into the inn yard, and he smiles as he observes and listens to the stories of the early comers; the wayfarers, the carriers and others, congregating and clamouring.

"What ostler, I say?*

Anon, anon, Sir,"

"I think this be the most villanous house in all London for fleas; I'm stung like a tench."

* Henry IV.

“Odsbody, the turkeys in my panniers are quite starved. What, ostler, I say, a plague on thee; can’st not hear? an’ ’twere not as good a deed as drink to break the pate of thee, I am a very villain.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is a stirring scene, getting more and more amusing as the day wears on, and the traffic and bustle increases. See how the pigeons wheel and curvet about, or pick up peas amongst the numerous poultry. They are so tame that yonder groom or custrel, a sort of demi-lance just off the road, almost steps upon some of them as they run bobbing under his very feet, whilst he rubs down his strong jointed roadster. See the tame raven, too, popping about and calling

men by their names in hoarse guttural tones. Then there is the pedlar just getting under way, and the travelling musician, and the tattered soldier of the war ; and then again there is the stalwart sturdy man-at-arms, follower of some great noble, badge on sleeve, and back and breast, and plumed castor ; with Pistol strut and fierce moustache, a greater man in that yard, than his master is at the Court, and yet whilst in attendance upon the *great*, all service and duty, and profession of respect. It's all life and bustle, and vanity and vexation. Hear them there calling for attendance, quaffing from pottle pots, full of laughter and fun, and perhaps with a few oaths and curses into the bargain. See the minstrels strike up, the "crowd is tuned ;" the pedlar, too, sings his wares as he offers them, perhaps actually in the very words in which the poet has rendered them.

"Gloves as sweet as damask roses,
Masks for faces and for noses,
Come buy of me, come buy, come buy,
Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry."

"Oh, master, if you did but hear the pedlar at the door, you would never dance again after a tabor and pipe."

Oh, 'tis a brave fellow; he hath songs for man or woman; ribands of all colours i' the rainbow. Hark, he speaks again.

"Here's another ballard of a fish that appeared at the court o' Wednesday last; and here, Master Shakspeare," said the pedlar, who had approached the poet where he stood on descending from his chamber, "here is a letter given to me in all secrecy, and by one I met last night, and by whose express desire I have travelled to this inn to find yourself, and to deliver it into your own hand."

Shakspeare looked at the pedlar, a shrewd looking knave, one whose way of life had taught him every cunning dodge it was necessary to know; but "for which of his virtues he had been whipped out of court," perhaps he himself could hardly tell. He had been ape bearer, process server, married a tapster's wife, and having flown over many knavish professions, had at length "settled only in rogue."

"You received this, you say, when and where?" inquired Shakspeare, taking the letter.

"Marry, Sir, last night as I traversed hitherwards from Rochester, a sailor—but one my quick penetration and experience of mankind showed me was not what he seemed—met me near Shooter's Hill; he asked the way to Gravesend, and as I was bound to London, desired me to find you out here, and deliver it into your own hands."

"How know you that you have delivered it aright?" inquired Shakspeare.

"La, you there now," said the pedlar, "as if an actor like myself did not know, or had not seen, or could not recognize the great master of the art. Truly, Master Shakspeare, I am never so merry as when I look upon thy doings here at the Globe and Blackfriars."

Shakspeare opened the note, read it, and seemed much moved.

"Thou hast done me some service in this, my good fellow," he said. "There is money for thy pains."

"Not a penny, not a penny from thee, good Master Shakspeare. If I have done thee service, I am content."

The letter, such as it was, was written upon a small scrap of paper torn from a tablet book. It was short, but to the purpose, somewhat thus :

"I have been unable to meet you as

promised. Happily I have got some clue to the business in hand, and am even now on the trail of the villain. His intents are wild and desperate, as I learn them, but I will perish or baffle him. At advantage you shall again hear from me."

The message, as our readers will have doubtless surmised, was from Rookwood. Its contents gave some comfort to the poet; anything was better than the mystery, the utter want of intelligence, which had hitherto shadowed the fate of Geraldine. That she was still at least alive, which he had begun to doubt, and that his devoted friend was cognizant of her whereabouts, was something like a foundation for hope.

His avocations at the Globe Theatre at this period were not pressing. 'Tis true he had some matters of business on hand for my Lord Southampton, which would occupy his time till nigh noon, and then he mounted his horse, and set off towards Rochester, and

traversed those lovely scenes, those ancient woods in which his scenes are laid in Henry the Fourth.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN these later days of quick transfer the ruralities of England are comparatively unknown. Even in the days of coaching and posting there was something remaining of old England's enjoyment and old England's peculiar aspect—its park-like beauty, its fine Norman strong holds, the mansions of the ancient gentry, its halls, its castles, its cottages, which stood amidst woods, dales and forests; nay but a short time back, just ere rail superseded all other travel, in our youth we can remember drawing bridle as the

gloaming approached to look upon that leafy scene near Gadshill and Rochester.

Shakspeare now traversed that old Kent road. He must have travelled it often. For his scenes, breathe of Kent and the chivalry of England upon Kentish ground; knight and noble, king and peasant, all who made up the file, he seems to have loved to portray.

The poet passed onwards through Dartford, and Sittingbourne on that night, and then went on, and again he was fain to be a borrower of the night for his journey. The road on this highway, so much more used at that period than any other in merrie England, that it was accordingly much fitter for travel. The thick woodlands on either hand, like those about his native town, and from Coventry to Warwick, had been widened, and the trees cut down, in order, as the order worded it, "that travellers and wayfarers might have more space and more elbow room to defend

themselves against the numerous outlaws infesting every part of the country." Nay, men went in parties and in companies if they had business 'twixt town and town in many parts, as travel was so unsafe. But Shakspeare travelled alone.

The stealthy blade of a common robber on that night, or the bullet of a low cast ruffian from behind a bush might have robbed all England, all the world of the mine of glory his after works have exhibited. But still he rode on, and no robber cried "Stand to the true man," on that night. He drew not bridle save to rest for a bait and to feed his horse, till he reached Rochester.

The inn yard at Rochester was but lately a well-known spot to the traveller; nay, but a few years back it might have been seen in almost the same state as it was in Elizabeth's day, when it was doubtless haunted by such cut purse rascals as Gadshill and Chamberlain.

Its ample space was on this night well filled with traffickers and travellers, as Shakspeare, after crossing the Medway, rode beneath its ample gate-house. The moon shone brightly, and tipped with silver the trees of the plaisance of that fine old castle which rears its portentous strength so near as almost to cast its shadow upon the old inn itself.

It was indeed a scene of beauty. The poet was well-known to the host and to most of the establishment, and forthwith as he mingled amongst the throng, he proceeded with all caution to make inquiry after those he sought. He had done so at all the places he had passed through, and at times thought he must be near them; but like Tubal,

“He often came where he did hear tidings,
But failed to catch them.”

There was a little old bald shot of an ostler at the “Crown,” and from him he

learned that a suspicious party, which consisted of two cavaliers well armed, had escorted a horse litter, containing a female, supposed to be the wife of one, and who being insane, together with another female, her attendant, was being conveyed to their home somewhere near the coast. They had halted there the very night previously, and the two females had been conveyed into a chamber above the stables; one of the females, his informant told him, he felt certain was not only a prisoner, but so closely guarded that she could not communicate with any one but those who had her in custody.

Such was about the whole of the information the poet gained at Rochester. The party had departed early, and were seen by some travellers ascending Chatham Hill; and afterwards further trace of them for that time was lost.

Still he pushed onwards, passed the village of Ospringe, and so on to Faversham,

where he again came upon traces of the party, and then he pushed on towards Canterbury. Some intelligence he received at Canterbury led the poet to look for those he sought near the coast, and accordingly he soon found himself in the old Dutch built town of Sandwich; then a strongly fortified, walled, and ramparted place.

Lone, deserted, decayed, and ruinous as this singular town now appears, in Elizabeth's day it presented a vastly different aspect. Its quaint old streets and thoroughfares being filled with merchants and traders from all parts, its gate-houses guarded by stalwart men-at-arms, and the waters of its sluggish river filled with shipping.

A high decked carrosel, a sort of small ship of war of the period, had on the very day the poet walked the streets of this old port, warped out of the river and stood out to sea.

Her Majesty the Queen was expected at

Sandwich just about this time, as she paid periodical visits to her Cinque Ports generally once a year. Sandwich she had an especial esteem for, and as the following week was the time fixed by her to be there, the whole place was in a state of bustle and excitement.

After stabling his steed at the hostel of the "Fishers' Gate," the poet walked across the waste towards the sands of the sea shore, celebrated in the annals of those parts as the spot upon which the galleys of Cæsar had been drawn up, and where the grassy mounds by which they were surrounded and entrenched still remain.

Few scenes are more beautiful than the extensive sands which at low tide stretch for miles on either hand between the pale and white faced cliffs. A spot where as the gazer looks around, so wild and desolate is its aspect, that he might almost fancy himself upon the shores of an island in the Indian

seas, and expect to see the fairies dancing their ringlets to the whistling wind.

Whilst the poet stood admiring the scene, the before named ship, which had been standing out towards the Goodwins, turned, lowered her canvas and cast anchor some little distance from the mouth of the haven, and as it swung round, a volume of smoke issued from its side, and the deep boom of a gun resounded over the waste, and a boat was lowered from its side.

The scene was a lovely one, the sun was descending into the sea,

“The faint track of his fiery car,”

giving token of a glorious day on the morrow.

The poet stood and gazed for some time in silent admiration as the boat at first, like a speck upon the waters, gradually neared the shore.

At first he thought it was intending to make

for Sandowne Castle, a fortress reared by Bluff Hal at some distance towards the high cliffs of Dover, and then as it neared the shore he saw that it contained armed men, and was coming towards the spot where he stood.

The times were dangerous. The place lone and deserted. The wild spirit of adventure so pervaded the minds of all seamen, and the lawless state of the high seas, in which so much piracy was in vogue, made the captains of vessels more unscrupulous in seizing upon individuals, entrapping them, and so making up a crew.

The adventurers of the period were indeed the most lawless and unscrupulous of seamen ; and the very play the poet had himself just written, shed a halo, a romance over all such expeditions. It was indeed one of the great features of the age, and the reign, that wild spirit of adventure, that thirst after discovery, and those lands of mystery, and enchantment, where the

women were all houris of paradise, the spring eternal, the air laden with perfumes the sweetest, melody to be heard on the breezes, and gold to be had for the gathering.

The poet drew off as the boat neared the shore, and walked apart near the sand hills, where he could observe, himself being unseen.

As it touched the sands, the crew, consisting of six men, leaped on shore, drew it up high and dry, and leaving one of the party to guard it, the remaining five set off towards the town.

There was a ruffianly and suspicious appearance about the fellows who had landed, which showed the poet at once that they could hardly belong to a respectable merchant vessel; neither were they seamen belonging to any vessel of war such as he had ever before seen; but armed to the teeth, and bronzed by the sun of the tropics, they had more the cut of those rake-helly fellows

who knew "no peace beyond the line"—pirates of the worst class.

After watching them for some distance, Shakspeare approached the sailor in charge of the boat. The man was standing with arms folded, and watching the distant barque so intently, that he heard not his approach till the poet was close upon him.

"You keep careful watch here," said Shakspeare.

The man turned quickly round, and Shakspeare uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Rookwood!" he said, starting.

'Twas even so. The sailor who stood on guard over the boat from the carrousel was no other than his friend.

Rookwood was equally surprised.

"Of all men," he said, "you are the one I most wished to see, and whose presence is most welcome."

"After I received your missive I resolved to follow," returned Shakspeare. "But I almost fear to inquire after her we both seek."

"Thank Heaven she lives!" returned Rookwood; "though perhaps it were better that she were dead, unless within the next twenty-four hours we can extricate her."

"Is she in the neighbouring town?" inquired the poet.

"No; would she were."

"Where then?"

Rookwood glanced seaward.

"How mean ye?"

"In yonder vessel."

"You amaze me. What is that vessel?"

"A pirate."

"And who is her chief?"

"The villain Corbelt."

"Is he on board?"

"No. There is a mystery attached to his

state; he is sick, wounded; but now he was brought ashore in order to seek advice from the leech in the town here. I have followed close upon the track of Geraldine and her captor. Last night they arrived at Sandwich, where I succeeded in getting engaged as one of the crew of yonder craft. The rest I must tell you at more advantage. Meantime the question now is, what is best to be done? Time presses, and on the re-embarkation of Corbelt the ship will at once get out to sea."

Shakspeare considered for a few moments.

"That villain must never be allowed to re-embark," he said.

"How hinder it," returned Rookwood. "His crew are numerous, well armed, and desperate. In one hour they have promised to return."

"Meantime, in order to tie their hands so far, we must scuttle their boat, and cast it adrift."

“And now for the caitiff Corbelt,” said Shakspeare, as they set off towards the town, “who we must capture at all hazards.”

CHAPTER XX.

IN order to explain to our readers the presence of Geraldine on board the vessel, and other matters appertaining, we must now return to that heroic girl, at the time she lay captive in Lord Rich's power, and in hourly expectation of a visit from him.

The villain who had felt "the danger of her true defence," had intimated to her through Corbelt that he intended in a few days to revisit her at his country residence in Kent.

Corbelt, however, never intended that such should be the case; although he had, in fact, received instructions from his lord to manage the matter so that with as little delay as possible she might be conveyed there.

The fact was that Pierce Corbelt had himself conceived a most violent passion for the fair Geraldine. Her beauty and the spirit and resolution with which she had repelled his unscrupulous lord's advances had indeed impressed him with the greatest admiration.

Like many other followers of the Court, Corbelt had from early youth been a sailor, and more than once made the western voyage; and for some time previous to his introduction to our readers he had entertained a project of his own, which was to rob his master, and fit out a ship for the Spanish Main. Nay, it was but a few weeks before the abduction of Geraldine that he had so

far perfected his plans as to have purchased a vessel, and engaged a crew of resolute fellows for the expedition.

On the morning after his interview with Lord Rich, the caitiff entered the chamber in which Geraldine was confined, and after informing her that she must change her residence, desired her to equip herself in hat and cloak, and follow him without delay. The spirited girl at once refused to do so until informed where she was to be removed to, and by whose directions he was acting.

Corbelt was but a rude tire man, as he affirmed, and he had but short time to spend in useless parlance. The orders of his principal must be obeyed at all hazards, and at once.

So saying, and making a sign to the fellows he had brought with him, they seized Geraldine, pinioned her arms, and after Corbelt had thrown a cloak over her head so

as to stifle her cries, they conveyed her at once from the house, placed her in a conveyance they had in waiting, and so carried her to the rooms provided for her reception.

Geraldine soon found the change was by no means for the better, as she was evidently now in some common hostel in some low locality in the purlieus of Old Pauls. Her prison house consisted of a small chamber in a low roofed room, with no furniture save an antiquated square topped bed, a seaman's chest, and a chair or two, the windows being strongly barred, and the door securely fastened.

In this place Corbelt left her in custody of an evil-looking woman, who was apparently the landlady of the house.

Corbelt now made all speed back to Whitehall, and informed his lordship that his charge was on her way to his residence in Kent. Taking advantage of his lordship's

confinement to his chamber, the caitiff then once more stole off with the booty he had previously secured.

To place that on board his ship, which lay at anchor in the Medway, was now his next business. He then returned to his prisoner, had her placed in a litter, and so conveyed to the Kentish coast, even to the old town of Sandwich, his vessel being ordered round so as to meet him there.

So far Master Pierce Corbelt had gone on and prospered. He had worked hard and done all so well and so secretly as he thought, that his prey and his booty were now fairly beyond reach of danger. He had but a few more necessities to embark, and then hey for the New World!

Knowing the nature of the fellows he had picked up as a crew, he had not chosen to put Geraldine on board till he himself was able to join, and on his at length doing so at Sandwich, she was accordingly forth-

with carried on board, himself following and at once assuming the command of the vessel. It was a goodly craft for that period, and a goodly crew to look at, but unluckily for the captain he had undertaken rather more than he could carry out, and at Sandwich he experienced a check which threatened the shipwreck of all his hopes.

The vessel according to order, after rounding the Foreland, and passing Pegwell Bay, had at first quietly entered the mouth of the Haven, and anchored just without the walls of the town, there to receive certain merchandise and its future commander.

There, however, as before said, he received a check the same as his sometime employer had done before him.

CHAPTER XXI

PIERCE CORBELT' was rather a different sort of a wooer to his late master. Both were bad enough ; but one was at least something of a gentleman in manner, however unscrupulous he might be in disposition. Corbelt thought that women were only to be managed by rough usage and intimidation, particularly in instances like the present.

"Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries."

Accordingly as soon as he returned from

town, he went on board his vessel, assembled and addressed his crew, and gave orders to warp out to sea immediately.

This was about mid-day on the day the poet had arrived at Sandwich, and as he stood and gazed upon the sands, he little thought who was on board the vessel, the graceful movements of which so much interested him. Geraldine Maynard, the young, the beautiful, that model creature, in his eyes "formed of every creature's best," he now almost began to fear was lost to him for ever.

Yet Geraldine Maynard true to herself, to him, and to all, was at that moment defending herself from the ruffianly assault of her new persecutor.

Corbelt, after taking command, had watched his vessel as it took its course along the Haven, and by the aid of towing at length got nearly out to sea, and then he

descended to the cabin to pay a visit to his prisoner.

When the ruffian entered the cabin in which Geraldine was confined, she was gazing from the window upon a scene as new as it was beautiful, and which under any other circumstances would have been like some scene of enchantment.

In fact, desperate as was her situation, she could hardly choose but dwell upon some of the descriptions penned by the wondrous individual she had been so lately associated with, and who indeed so frequently occupied her thoughts.

She had never before beheld the sea, and now for the first time she was riding upon its billows, and as she looked forth towards the opposite coast she beheld "a city on the inconstant waves." The Channel Fleet of that day was in fact just then passing towards the Downs.

The brave ships, so gorgeous in their appointments, sails, and the flags they bore.

"With silken streamers the young Phœbus fanning
Upon the hempen tackle ship boys climbing."

Then came

"The shrill whistle which did order give,
To sounds confused. The threaten sails
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind,
Drawing the huge billows through the furrow'd sea."

As she regarded this splendid sight, the cabin door opening caused her to turn her eye, and it encountered the tall form of Corbelt.

He threw down his plumed hat, strode across the cabin, and as Geraldine started up, seated himself beside her.

"You have had a rough voyage, young maiden," he said; "aye, and by my faith, roughish companions too. Now, however, that you have taken possession of your new home, I hope to console you for all past troubles."

Geraldine had by some means learned

that her original captor was Lord Rich, her surprise and indignation, therefore, was equal to her alarm and disgust, when she found that Corbelt himself was now her professed admirer.

She started up as he seized her hand, and snatched it from him.

"Come," he said, "we must have no nonsense here. My crew are not aware that I have a female on board this vessel, as it is against our rules, and if they find it out, 'twill be all the worse not only for you, but for myself too. Come," he added, approaching her as she drew back, "no more of this coquetry, good Mistress Geraldine Maynard; you are now the wife of Captain Corbelt, of the good ship 'Bonaventura,' bound for the Indies, where you shall reign a queen."

The villain closed with her as he spoke, but Geraldine plucked forth the dagger she had extemporised when in Lord Rich's mansion,

and like lightning plunged it into his breast.

She intended to pierce his heart, but luckily for the villain it just missed that organ. Uttering a cry of pain, the caitiff reeled and fell.

Geraldine would now have rushed from the cabin, but as she attempted to do so, the door opened, and a sailor entered and closed it behind him. The new comer put his finger to his lip as a sign for her to be silent; he then stooped and looked at the prostrate form.

"The scoundrel has fainted," he observed, "but you are in imminent danger here, lady, from more enemies than one. Take courage, however, a friend is near."

He drew back the broad brimmed castor by which his features were shrouded, and Geraldine beheld Rookwood.

Again he put his finger to his lip. "See," he said, "the miscreant is recovering. We

have but a few moments to hold converse. In few, you must not attempt to leave this cabin till I myself aid you. What this man has told you is the truth; once seen on board the vessel, and your fate is sealed. Remain perfectly quiet, I will be near, and at advantage endeavour to extricate you from the dangers by which you are surrounded."

Geraldine felt her courage renewed at the sight of her friend. She would have asked a hundred questions, but again he signed to her to remain silent.

Meantime the wounded man recovered, sat up, and now stared about him.

"How came you here, knave?" he said, as Rookwood offered to assist him to rise.

"I heard you call as I was on sentry without," returned Rookwood, "and hastened to your assistance."

"Bear a hand then," said Corbelt; "this

jade has, I fear, given me my death wound. She seems born to be my destruction. Let me see—you are the man I hired at Sandwich last night?"

"I am."

"Are you to be trusted?"

"If paid well."

"There, I believe you. Well then, keep this matter secret. No one must know that I have brought a female on board the vessel. There is gold for thee. Now give directions to man a boat at once. I am badly hurt, and must seek a surgeon in yonder town."

Rookwood supported his new captain upon deck; an accident was supposed to be the cause of his hurt, and a boat being manned, they departed as we have seen, for the town.

Rookwood would fain have remained on board to be near Geraldine, but Corbelt ordered him into the boat. He feared to

leave him behind, lest he should divulge his secret to his comrades. All Rookwood could do, therefore, was again to steal a few words with Geraldine as the boat put off.

"Keep close," he said, "the captain's cabin is always secured in his absence. If life holds, I will be with you again speedily."

"And if not, I have still this for myself," said Geraldine, showing the dagger.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE poet and his friend Rookwood followed the pirate and his companions at a safe distance. They watched them enter the town, and then marked them down to a hostel situated near the Haven, and then they proceeded to put in practice the scheme they had concocted in order to get Geraldine safely on shore. Both knew that the attempt would most probably be without the deed, as in those times, and as things were managed in regard to maritime affairs, vessels like the one in question were neither

to be captured easily, or even approached with impunity.

- Under these circumstances it was resolved, that whilst Rookwood kept good watch upon the house, Shakspeare should wait upon the chief magistrate of the port, and after telling him the story of Geraldine's abduction, request his interference, so as to arrest Corbelt, and send an armed force to recapture Geraldine.

The Magistrate was a good deal puzzled at first; he did not half like the business in hand; he was at the same time, he affirmed, overwhelmed with business connected with his great office, and the approaching visit of the Queen. He stuttered, stammered, and asked a hundred questions. Then he consulted with his Com-Barons of the port, then he doubted the story of the ship being a pirate, and then he almost resolved to have nothing to do with the affair at all.

"I should have no hesitation to act in this matter, Master Shakspeare," said the pompous official, "as far as the law will give me cable. But the question is, what is the law, and who will expound it to me? How for instance am I to know that this vessel is a pirate? nay, what is piracy? My friends and comrades, Drake, Frobisher, and Hawkins have loose notions upon that subject; and as regards this young woman on board this carrol or pirate, as you are pleased to term her, how can I proceed until I have more clear proof than you have given me, that she is a prisoner at all? I may even be interfering between man and wife, and whoso does that, deserves all he gets, eh, Master Shakspeare?"

That Master Shakspeare quickly discovered the chief Magistrate of Sandwich was a most sapient and egregious ass, our readers need hardly doubt. In fact, all he could extract or manage to get out of him was the

promise of a sort of civic guard of some six men-at-arms, who under the direction of one of the head constables, was ordered to proceed down to the hostel of the Chequers, where Corbelt was supposed to be, and place him under arrest till he gave good and sufficient account of himself and his suspicious looking vessel.

Furthermore, he promised, and which was much more to the purpose, to dispatch a messenger forthwith to the Captain of the guard ship at Deal, with directions to look after and overhaul and inspect the papers of a certain vessel just then lying at anchor at the mouth of the Haven, and if she was really a pirate, to burn, sink, and destroy—if he could.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MEANWHILE, suspecting nothing, Captain Corbelt of the good ship "Bonaventura," had sent for a neighbouring surgeon, had his hurt looked to, ascertained that it was not so dangerous a wound as he had at first feared; though, certes, it was a very sufficient puncture, as the pompous Leech said, just within an ace of hitting the great artery there situate, and in itself complicated by being and appearing as if inflicted by a somewhat old and rusted weapon.

All this having been effected, Corbelt was

about to depart, when the Supervisor of the water delf, or head-constable of the town, unexpectedly and unceremoniously placed his hand upon his shoulder, and in the name of the Mayor and Com-Barons of the port, forthwith made him prisoner.

The immortal bard, as he was termed in after days—the poor player then—was however mistaken if he thought that by capturing “the head and front of the offending” in the person of Captain Corbelt, he had made an important step towards the safety of Geraldine Maynard, and that he soon found.

The hostel of the Chequers was situate on the river's bank on the Thanet side of the town, and was indeed the resort of almost all the seamen who at that time came ashore. Corbelt and his two comrades were sitting in one of its low-roofed rooms, a room which was not unlike the cabin of a vessel, and whose one window beetled over

the Haven, when the head-constable entered and informed him that he was a prisoner.

Corbelt was solacing himself with a cup of canary, and enjoying a few whiffs of the weed of Sir Walter, just then come into fashion, and was, indeed, just on the point of returning to his ship, when he found himself in this new difficulty—nay, 'twas ruin, utter ruin—the demolition of all his schemes, the loss of ship, and booty, of his prey, of everything. At first, he thought there must be some mistake, as he started up, called upon his comrades to aid him, drew his blade, and stood at bay.

“This is surely some mistake, Master Constable,” he said. “For what am I thus arrested, and by whose order?”

“For piracy upon the high-seas,” returned the head-constable. “Neither more nor less.”

“Piracy, what piracy have I committed?”

“Hereafter as may be,” said the func-

tionary, "that's just what we mean to find out."

"Is anything else laid to my charge?" said Corbelt, who began to fear he had been traced by his former master.

"Yes, robbery and abduction."

"Robbery of what?"

"Well, then, pretty-lasseny, if you like it better," said the constable, "you have stolen a young female from her parents and must answer it. So come along."

Sailors are generally ready enough to help each other on any sudden emergency. There were several in and about the house, and accordingly a general row and an attempt at a rescue immediately ensued. Notwithstanding which, however, Captain Corbelt was safely secured and taken to the gate-house prison hard by.

So far the poet had succeeded, the pirate-chief was in custody, but unluckily, the two ruffians, his companions, as soon as they saw

how matters were likely to go, had let themselves out of the window into a boat, and with might and with main pulled off in the hope of getting to their ship.

Rookwood, who had remained without, on guard, saw this movement without being able to frustrate it, he knew the probable consequences, and hastened to find his friend.

"I must on board," he said, "at once. Those caitiffs have escaped I find. They will join their ship and put to sea immediately, even without their commander. I leave you to judge what will then be the state of affairs. Nay, we are in a worse strait than we were before."

"Here is gold, my friend," said Shakspeare, handing Rookwood his purse. "Hire a boat, and follow with all speed. Meantime, I will remain here to prefer a charge against this villain Corbelt and see that he is kept in safe custody."

Rookwood required no second bidding. He set off full speed in search of a boat, and managed to reach the ship a few minutes before the two sailors got on board.

The lieutenant of the 'Bonaventura' was a man who had felt the sharpness of adversity, one who had traded east and west in various capacities, one perhaps more sinned against than sinning, and yet whose disposition in his present situation was somewhat dangerous. He felt rather astonished when he was informed by the sailors of the capture of his principal, and the state of affairs on shore; and he paced the deck of his vessel for some moments undecided how to proceed.

Rookwood would fain have deceived and tried to detain him until he effected the liberation of Geraldine, of whose presence he was, of course, quite ignorant. That was now, however, impossible, as the Lieutenant suddenly ordered all hands to

heave up the anchor, spread the sails, and
put out to sea. So that as

“The shrill whistle sounded,”

the sails were spread to the invisible and
creeping winds, and

“The good ship breasted the lofty surge.”

Geraldine, who had taken Rookwood's advice and kept close, was listening to the confused sounds, the heavy steps of the sailors, and their musical cry as they got up the anchor, and then felt the ship bound like a startled steed over the “glad waters,” when she beheld the cabin door open, and Rookwood again was at her side.

“Haste, lady,” he said, “whilst all are on deck. Equip yourself in these habiliments. It is your only chance of safety now, and of escape hereafter.”

As Rookwood spoke, he handed Geraldine

a small bundle which he had purloined from the ship's stores, a sea boy's dress.

"Ask no questions," he said. "The vessel has changed hands, and he who now is the commanding officer will most likely take possession of this cabin. You must pass for an attendant, a sort of page of our former captain."

"The ship is, I fear, going to sea," said Geraldine.

"It is ; and we must manage to escape by one of the boats as soon as may be. The night is settling down dark. Adieu for the present. Be quick, change your dress, and manage to hide the habiliments you now wear. Keep up your spirits," he added as he left the cabin, "you will require all your courage this night."

"Fear me not," said Geraldine ; "anything rather than this hateful captivity, and this fearful ship ; even the deep waters of the sea shall be more welcome."

Rookwood left her and returned on deck, where all was still bustle and activity.

"This long heavy swell," he said approaching the Lieutenant, "gives sign of a coming storm ; the night is getting dark, too."

"You joined this ship last night, me-thinks," said the Lieutenant, without replying to his remark.

"I did ; as clerk to the Captain."

"You may as well, then, understand that I am now the commander here. You know, I suppose, our destination, and the colours we shall sail under."

"The black flag."

"Enough ; anon I will talk with you. Hark ! that's a voice not to be neglected."

A heavy clap of thunder burst forth, and as suddenly a perfect torrent of rain poured down with a hissing sound. That which gave anxiety to the crew of the "Bonaventura," however gave comfort and satisfaction to Rookwood.

"Thank Heaven for that!" he said, as the lightning now flashed so vividly as almost to sear his eyelashes, making the darkness of the night more hideous. "Such weather as this is likely to prove, will keep them all at work."

It was indeed an awful night, and as the gale increased, the ship drove before it like a race horse. Poor Geraldine, despite her high courage, for the first time witness of such a terrible scene, could hardly stifle the sobs which burst from her very heart, as overcome with terror and sickness she reclined in the cabin.

Rookwood was beside her whenever he could, and spoke the comfort he did not feel. For things above seemed even more desperate than they did below.

With a sufficient crew, composed of experienced seamen, and properly commanded, there would have been less danger; but the "Bonaventura" had been manned by

a set of ruffians, picked up about Deptford and Wapping, and whose sole recommendation to their hirer had been their having before adventured to the New World, and being ready for any chance.

He who now had command was, however, at least a good sailor, and saw his danger. Consequently, luckily for Geraldine, he never left the deck whilst the tempest lasted. For two days and a night the ship scudded before the storm, almost at the mercy of the elements. At length all went to "cureless ruin." The vessel became unmanageable, as well as unmanaged, and it became a scene such as our poet has himself pictured in his "Tempest."

"The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking
pitch,

But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashed the fire out. The brave vessel,
Who had no doubt some noble creatures in her,
Was dash'd all to pieces."

As they neared the Irish coast, Rookwood saw that the case was desperate, the crew had rushed to the spirit room, and amidst a terrible scene of brawl and bloodshed the vessel was sinking fast. The pumps which were choked, had been for some time abandoned ; the water gained upon them every moment. He therefore took the only means in his power to save himself and Geraldine. Luckily the storm had somewhat subsided as the ship now settled down, which enabled him with difficulty to lower a boat, into which he assisted Geraldine, and then jumped in himself.

The sometime commanding officer, who stood with arms folded awaiting the sinking of the ship, looked on apathetically as he did so, apparently he was lost in the horrors of such a situation. Dangerous as was his companionship, the generous Rookwood could not consent to abandon him after

the attempt he had made to save the vessel.

"You had better come with us," he said, as he prepared to shove the boat clear.

"I am as well here," returned the pirate; "your boat will scarce live in such a sea as this."

There was no time for further parley; the vessel gave a heel and a lurch, and went down head foremost; nay, it was all Rookwood could do to keep his boat clear of the vortex, and save himself and Geraldine from being engulfed.

"That was a narrow escape," he said, as the boat now mounted a great wave. "Sit tight," he added to Geraldine.

A loud clap of thunder, which was followed by a perfect blaze of lightning, lighted the waters all around them.

"Great heavens!" said Geraldine, "a

man is swimming towards us ; look, he is close to the boat."

Rookwood stretched his oar towards the pirate, who had been sucked down with the ship, and then risen again to the surface. The love of life prevailed, he clutched the oar, and Rookwood helped him in.

"I might as well have taken your advice at first," he said. "The boat rides well, can we raise a sail?"

"We might try," said Rookwood, "the wind is with us."

A tremendous sea at this moment struck the boat on her quarter, and nearly overset her ; not a word was uttered for some minutes. Rookwood sat and supported Geraldine, and then an attempt to get up the sail was made.

"She is going fast through the water now," said Rookwood, as he watched the canvas anxiously.

"That boy is singing himself to sleep,"

said the Lieutenant. "Where did he come from, I saw him not on board the vessel?"

"The boat is labouring too much," said Rookwood, laying Geraldine gently down, and then springing up and lowering the sail, at the same time evading the question. "See," he continued, "she goes better now, she had more sail than she could bear."

"I fear that all is in vain," said the Lieutenant, "I was never before in such a sea as this in an open boat. She plunges fearfully."

"Bale out," said Rookwood, "and keep quiet. Courage," he whispered to Geraldine, who now awoke, and looked with terror on the dark rolling waters, as they seemed to tear and race past the sides of the frail craft; "courage, and we shall yet be saved."

"Is that lad there your son?" said the Lieutenant, as he paused for a moment

whilst baling, and steadily regarded Rookwood.

Rookwood made no reply, he was glad that Geraldine again slept in such a scene of terror. Suddenly she again awoke.

"Ah me," she said, as another flash of lightning was followed by a tremendous crash of thunder, "look at that dark cloud there right ahead of us."

"'Tis the land," cried Rookwood, "I see the mountains plainly."

"It gives hope of life," cried Geraldine. "See, there's a light, too. What is that sweeping past us there."

"A boat," said Rookwood; "they have put about and follow us."

"The lights shift," said the pirate; "the peasants here are dangerous. They carry torches on purpose to mislead us."

Their chance was a poor one even now. Still Geraldine uttered a cry of thanksgiving, and the pirate took an opportunity of re-

garding her steadily as another flash of lightning lighted up the sea all round. He saw through her disguise, and that the wet sea boy Rookwood seemed so careful of was a female.

It was near daybreak as they gained a small harbour on the coast of Galway, exhausted and worn with fatigue and anxiety, they sought shelter in one of the cabins near the coast.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ACCUSTOMED as our readers are to all the means and appliances of modern days, they would find it difficult to picture a time when the only roads in England were narrow embankments, along which horses travelled, and which were called high roads, because they were raised a few feet above the swampy levels they traversed. Nay, a fall of rain would oftentimes render a highway impassible, or a fall of snow in winter for a time obliterate the traces of it altogether, so that a traveller if he managed to get to the

"timely inn," might be there detained and obliged to postpone his journey *sine die*.

Such indeed were the difficulties and dangers of travel in Elizabeth's day, especially so in some parts of England, that the news of the death of a gentleman at his country seat might take two or three months before it was conveyed to the ears of his next heir in London.

When Elizabeth changed her residence, the removal of her household is said to have required no less than twenty-four thousand horses. When she travelled in order to pay visits to her different towns, or the private residences of her gentry, and nobility, albeit she did not require quite such an army of cars, carts, servitors, &c., still her progress was sufficiently important, and her followers, numerous beyond anything we can now imagine.

She was now on her way to Sandwich, travelling along the Old Kent Road, a beaten

track, and therefore easier and more open than any other road in England. Nay, her royal progress made the whole route 'twixt town and town, from Ludgate to Old Canterbury, more like a moving fair, a roadside revel than anything else. Suttlers, gipsies, mummers, mountebanks, followed at a distance, and even a company of actors from one of the London theatres were en route with her there, giving an occasional performance in the inn-yards of the various hostels, and keeping the crowd in good humour wherever they came.

Oh, it was pleasant to see that royal progress, with all its old world appliances. -

The Queen arrived at her Cinque Port of Sandwich a few days following the one on which Corbelt was captured and locked up.

To look upon the old town now, and to look upon it in Shakspeare's time, would be some-

what the same as to look upon the "counterfeit presentiment" of the two brothers,

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this."

Sandwich, walled, ramparted, filled with rich merchants, its streets thronged with the greatest in the realm; trade and traffic, abundant, argosies in its haven bound for the four quarters of the world, was indeed a very different place to the "mildew ear," the lone, desolate, deserted town from which sea and shipping, and inhabitants seem to have alike fled.

The Queen on this occasion was lodged at the house of the Mayor in Strand Street, a house in which her royal father had twice held his court.

She was fain, after the fatigue of her journey from Canterbury, to express herself highly delighted with her reception by the civic dignitaries, and also for the excellence of their "great and small shot."*

* Her own words.

"You have indeed, Master Mayor," she said, "exceeded report in your welcome. We had heard that your town could boast of a magnificent artillery, but indeed and in truth, our ears will not easily recover the welcome you have given us."

Sir Philip Mandeville, who was Mayor on this occasion, felt highly gratified.

"We shall hope to do our best to entertain your Majesty," he said, "in all things. Certain players from London have been overraught on the way, and are here to play before your Highness, an' it so please ye to witness their poor endeavour."

"With all my heart," said the Queen, "certes, we will welcome the players; nay, by're Lady, I did see the face of one amongst the throng, as I entered your town, whose visage it is not easy to forget when once seen, any more than are the honeyed words of his exquisite dramas. My Lord Southampton, the poet who you grace and

patronize is, I see, at Sandwich just now."

My Lord Southampton bowed. He felt glad to hear as much.

"By the same token," he observed, "your Majesty will understand me when I say that I but grace myself when patronizing, or I should rather say in being chosen as the patron of William Shakspeare."

"Your lordship says well," returned Elizabeth; "we can in some sort enter into your feelings; nay, we have heard that you have even presented this poet with the magnificent gift of one thousand pounds."

Lord Southampton again bowed.

"And it pleases me to see," added the Queen, "that in his dedication to your lordship, he hath avoided all that sycophantic laudation which men of his profession so frequently display."

"The man is of too noble a nature to

do aught unbecoming a gentleman," returned Southampton.

* * *

After her Majesty had rested for a brief space, the banquet was served in the hall of the mansion, and as her Majesty was entrenched chin-deep in observances, the meal was sufficiently formal. The Lord Mayor, rod in hand, after kneeling before her, presented her with a salt cellar, a plate, and some bread. Then one of the ladies, who was unmarried—for she liked not to be served or attended by married women—brought the tasting knife, and my Lord Mayor ceremoniously tasted of the bread. Then entered the Yeomen of the Guard, clothed in scarlet, a golden rose upon their backs, carrying a change of twenty-four dishes, whence each of these men were obliged to take a mouthful, for fear of poison.

Then her Majesty was pledged in a "loving

cup" by my Lord Mayor on bended knee, the kettle-drum and trumpet braying out the triumph of the pledge.*

So dined her Majesty at her ancient Cinque Port of Sandwich, and after dinner, my Lord Mayor, the Com-Barons of the Port, the court beauties, the gentlemen pensioners, the Yeomen of the Guard, the nobles, attendants, and all and everybody within the walls of that old town, were allowed to dine too.

It had pleased her on occasion of this her first arrival to take her feed alone, without extending invitations to any; no not even to her host, Master Mayor. Perhaps she wished at first to impress the Cinque Port authorities with her unapproachable importance at meal times. And meantime the several nobles who had accompanied

* It will seem, we dare say, somewhat extraordinary when we say, that the maiden queen with all this pomp, fed herself with her fingers.

her, were lodged, as occasion might be, at the private residences of the inhabitants and others, and at the various hostels within and without the town. Nay, Wingham and Ash, Woodensborough and Petit-Ham, and several other neighbouring villages, were put to their wit's end, and ransacked and rummaged to find accommodation, and to furnish forth provender and provisions for some of the followers of the Court on this occasion.

Her Majesty remained a whole week at Sandwich, and great were the doings, devices, and divertisements invented and set a going during that gay time; with all which, wonderful and diverting as they were, and recorded as they are in the printed annals of that important place, we have little or nothing to do, save and except as they touch upon the lives and fortunes of the principal personage of our story.

Our friend the poet remained within and

about the old town during the entire period that the Queen stopped there. He had, as we have seen, his lodging at the hostel of the "Fisher's Gate," and there whilst he watched and waited for tidings of his friends, he indited, as was his wont, some of his wonderful productions. What it was he was engaged on it is impossible to say. The magnificent scenes within the town, and the lovely aspect of his own "sea-girt isle," the main of waters, the chalky cliffs of Kent,

"That pale, that white-fac'd shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders."

Then there was the dizzy height, where
hung the man that gathered samphire.

"Dreadful trade,
The fishermen that walk upon the beech,
Appear like mice, and yon'd tall anchoring bark

Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy
Almost too small for sight."

Yes, all might have been at that time remarked by that "mind's eye," as he wandered in the neighbourhood, seeking for news of the vessel which had departed on that eventful night.

All, however, seemed hopeless. "He had persecuted time with hope, and found no other advantage but only the losing of hope by time."

Oh for some, even the slightest tidings of the vessel that so unfortunately had departed on the night of that awful storm; a night which was burnt into his remembrance as the "exhalations whiz'd in the air," and the roar of the winds and waves made him shrink. A night on which, whilst thinking of friends in peril, he had found it impossible to rest, but submitting himself unto the perilous storm, had wandered in the streets through a tempest dropping fire, and where

as the vivid lightning seemed to open the breast of heaven, he presented himself even in its aim and flash.

After a storm or tempest at sea, tidings of vessels lost or not lost, came but slowly, never came at all for the most part, unless they came themselves,

“Lean, rent, and beggared by the strumpet wind.”

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE week had elapsed, and Shakspeare again stood upon the sands of the sea shore. His capable eye traversed the main of waters, and passed over the very spot in the salt deep where he had before observed the ship, the carrosel in which, although he then knew it not, Geraldine was an enforced passenger. Where was that ship now? Had she ridden out the storm and gone onwards on her course? and if so, how had fared the gentle Geraldine? or how far had Rookwood been able to protect and aid her? But had Rookwood himself ever reached the vessel at all on that night of horrors? All these

thoughts passed through the mind of Shakspeare as he stood there.

Suddenly as he looked upon the waters, a good-sized fragment of some lost vessel attracted his gaze. He watched its progress as the tide brought it nearer and nearer. At last a huge falling wave flung it high and dry upon the sands at his very feet. Alas ! it brought the tidings he sought yet dreaded to find. It was part of the gilded stern of a goodly vessel. The moon which had risen whilst he stood watching the waves, shone out upon the golden letters which proclaimed its name the "Bonaventura."

The poet gazed for some moments in silent dread ; 'twas confirmation of his worst fears. It seemed as if all he was ever to know of Geraldine and his friend was conveyed in that dread remembrancer,

"Full fathom five they lay."

The poet sat down upon an adjoining bank, and wept till "as music seemed to

creep upon the waters," allaying both their fury and his passion with its sweet airs, he rose and took his way sadly towards the town.

* * * *

Whilst in Sandwich, Elizabeth enjoyed the usual quantum of pompous and adulatory pageants; plays and masques were performed, and her dearly loved sport of bull and bear batings were generally the after-dinner diversions each day she staid. Oh, it was a "merrie disporte" even to the lady attendants we fear, to sit or stand upon the "greene" just outside the walls and "neare the butts," and see the ill-tempered bear with pink eyne, leering upon the dogs; then what biting, clawing, tugging and tumbling ensued; then to see the bear shake his ears, "with the blood and slaver all about his physiognomie."*

"Then as the audience stood around, some in rings upon the green, some aloft and

* See the account.

some below, how they did shout and gesticulate, and show their delight." Fie on't, oh fie, ladies all! the sport was cruel to look upon, and the more the poor bear and the brave bull roared, and bellowed, and suffered, the more we fear your Tudor mistress and your own sweet selves were amused and delighted.

It would have been singular, methinks, could we have seen our Shakspeare standing in the ring upon that green, leaning upon his staff, and sending his keen glance upon bear and dog, and then turning it upon the Queen and her nobles, and ladies, as they witness that sport of sports. "To see how the bear tore out the dog's shoulder bone, how the dog cried for help, and how the bear mocked both, roaring louder than the sea."

END OF VOL. II.

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